

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Georgia Southern Magazine

University Communications and Marketing

Summer 2021

Georgia Southern Magazine

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/georgia-southern>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

This magazine is brought to you for free and open access by the University Communications and Marketing at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Southern Magazine by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

GEORGIA SOUTHERN

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2021

A YEAR LATER

EAGLES SOAR IN THE
SUN BELT

A CALLING TO SERVE

**GEORGIA SOUTHERN
AND GRETSCH
MAKE A SOUND
LIKE NO OTHER**

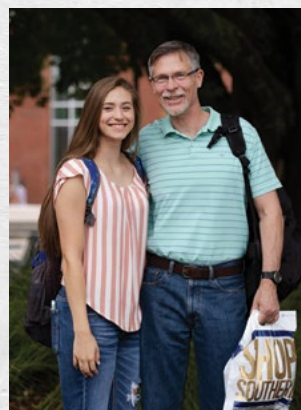
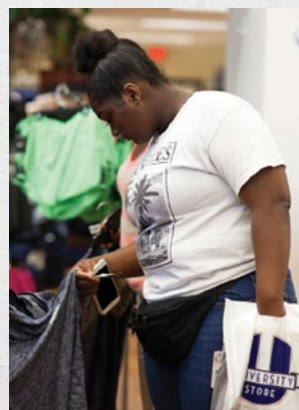


Every Eagle

Shops Here.



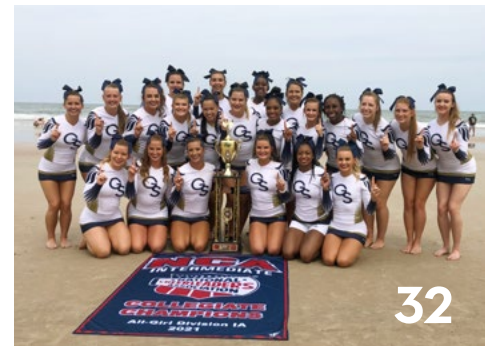
Past, present and future. Family, friends and fanatics. Every Eagle shops at the University Store. Visit our stores on the Armstrong and Statesboro Campuses of Georgia Southern University, or shop online at **GSUstore.com** for the latest and greatest official merchandise and apparel.



Follow us on social media @gsustore



GEORGIA SOUTHERN
UNIVERSITY



UP FRONT

NEWS AND EVENTS 4

TRUE BLUE SPOTLIGHT 7

FEATURES

SABA JALLOW RETIRES 8

A CALLING TO SERVE 10

AWARD-WINNING ARTIST 12

PORTAL PALS 14

PANDEMIC REFLECTIONS 16



SUMMER 2021, VOLUME 23, NUMBER 2

UNIVERSITY NEWS 18

RESEARCH 24

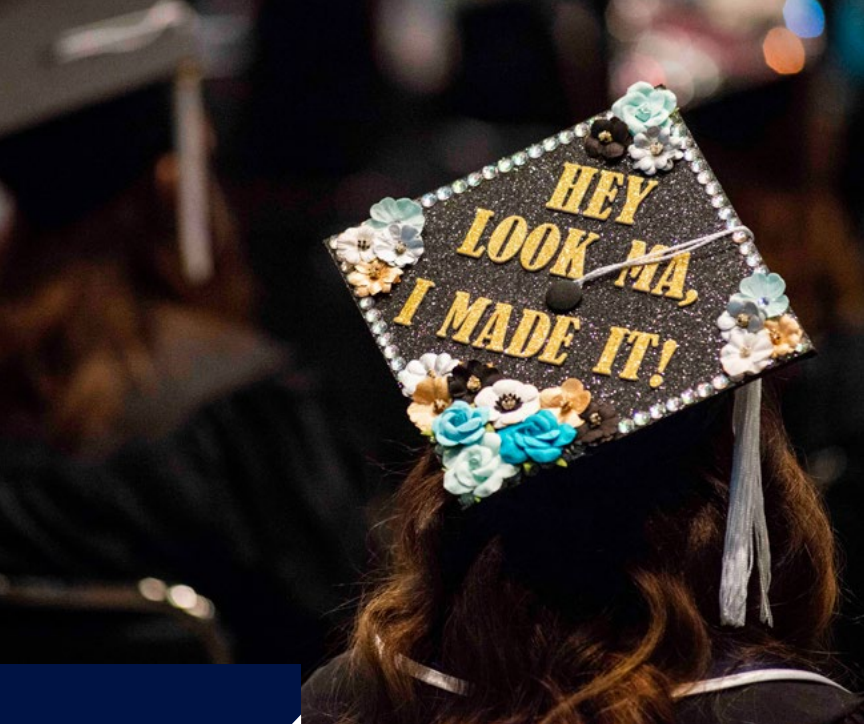
ATHLETICS 32

ALUMNI 42

SUPPORT 54

IN MEMORIAM 59

COVER: With a landmark gift from the Gretsches Family, Georgia Southern University established the Fred and Dinah Gretsches School of Music. Story on page 54. Photo by Jonathan Chick. Illustration by Christy McNutt.

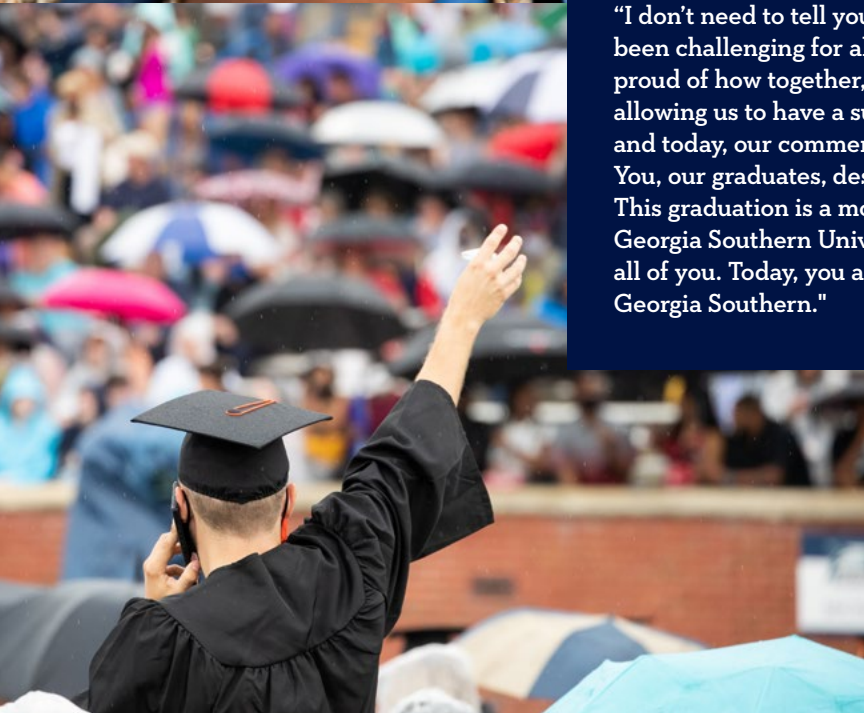


SIX SPRING CEREMONIES FOR GRADUATES

In six ceremonies held in Statesboro and Savannah, Georgia Southern recognized approximately 4,200 undergraduate and graduate students from the Statesboro, Armstrong and Liberty campuses during its Spring 2021 Commencement ceremonies.

Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero welcomed the graduates and their guests to the ceremonies, held at the Savannah Convention Center in Savannah on May 8, and the Allen E. Paulson Stadium in Statesboro on May 10, 11, 12 and 13. Marrero extended his personal congratulations to the graduates on their academic achievements.

"I need to say how nice it is to see you all today – to be together, in person, and celebrate together as Eagle Nation," he said. "I don't need to tell you that this year has been challenging for all of us, but I am very proud of how together, we have persevered, allowing us to have a successful semester and today, our commencement ceremony. You, our graduates, deserve this recognition. This graduation is a momentous occasion for Georgia Southern University, as well as for all of you. Today, you are part of history at Georgia Southern."







STUDENT VETERANS HELPING OTHERS

The Student Veterans of America (SVA) Armstrong Chapter is helping veterans who live in the Tiny House Project community in Savannah. During the spring semester, SVA volunteers collected food, personal hygiene products and other items for the residents. Anand D. Rao, president of the Armstrong Campus SVA, served as a combat medic in the U.S. Army for 10 years.

"We are veterans and want to help other veterans," said Rao, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. "The giving of food and supplies to the Tiny House Project will continue to be something the SVA does each semester along with our annual blood drive and

annual Toys for Tots drive. We appreciate everyone who donated items to the donation boxes located inside of the Military Resource Center."

The Tiny House Project is a housing initiative to reduce veteran homelessness by providing vets with an affordable place to live. Each of the 23 small homes in the community are equipped with a kitchen, bathroom and a bedroom - all within 26 square feet. SVA is a national organization that focuses on providing military veterans with the resources and support they need to succeed in their transition to higher education and employment.

ALTERNATIVE BREAKS PROGRAM CELEBRATES MILESTONE



Photo courtesy of Rachel Whitman, Alternative Breaks graduate assistant.

Established in 2006, the Alternative Breaks program is celebrating its 15th anniversary. An Alternative Break (AB) is a week-long or weekend immersive service experience in which a group of 10-12 students travel away from campus during breaks from school and engage with a new global community through education, service and reflection. The Alternative Breaks program has served 93 different communities through 192 trips in the past 15 years.

During the pandemic, the program had to adapt and still provide meaningful service opportunities while ensuring the safety of the students and those they served. AB offered Stay Breaks in the Statesboro and Savannah communities. In March, the Armstrong Stay Break Team volunteered at the Code of Return composting site in Savannah. The sustainability project creates compost from food scraps collected from restaurants and other businesses.

Throughout the Alternative Breaks program's 15 years, students have helped communities overcome challenges while bettering themselves in the process. Taylor Bishop, who served as a Statesboro Stay Breaks leader noted, "I personally think AB trips, no matter the distance, are one of Georgia Southern University's premier leadership opportunities offered. The trips are well-developed, issue forward and engaging. How did the AB program make service and learning this much fun?"



DE-STRESSING FOR EXAM SEASON

Finals week is without a doubt one of the most stressful times for students. When you combine that with the added weight of a pandemic, it's no wonder many students stress out for finals. Every semester the University Programming Board hosts a "No Stress Zone" event to help students unwind while preparing for final exams and end-of-semester projects. Some of the fun and engaging activities on the Armstrong Campus included smashing plates, making bracelets and painting. Participants in the "No Stress Zone" event on the Statesboro Campus indulged in ice cream and other rewarding activities as well. "Students also received a stress-reducing kit to take home, which included bath bombs, sleep masks, essential oils, etc.," said Memory Littles, director of the Office of Student Activities.

OFF TO THE IVY LEAGUE

New biology graduate Andrea Appleton ('21) has been granted admission to one of the most prestigious colleges in the United States. Appleton will enter a doctoral program at Harvard this fall where she will study floral evolution in hopes of becoming a professor one day. During her time at Georgia Southern, Appleton has been a standout scholar. The Honors College student was named a Goldwater Scholar, the highest national award for undergraduate students in the STEM majors. In addition, for the last two years, she served as the interim curator of the Georgia Southern Herbarium, the third largest collection of dried plant specimens in Georgia. That was an extraordinary opportunity for an undergraduate.

"Andrea has shown that hard work pays off," said Steven Engel, Ph.D., dean of the Honors College. "Furthermore, this demonstrates that the quality of the faculty and educational opportunities at Georgia Southern can open doors to wherever a student wants to go."

The new alumna says she "will miss absolutely everything about the herbarium, but particularly hosting visitors and introducing them to such a cool and unique resource."



NEW DEAN NAMED FOR COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Following a comprehensive search, Sharon Subreenduth, Ph.D., has been named dean of the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. She started her new duties on July 1. Prior to this appointment, Subreenduth served as the associate dean for Academic Affairs, Research and Graduate Studies and as a professor in the College of Education at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. In announcing her appointment, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Carl Reiber said that after a national search, "Dr. Subreenduth emerged as the most qualified and best-suited person to lead the college forward."

She brings a strong and diverse track record of accomplishments and experiences as an administrator, researcher, educator and community collaborator. Subreenduth grew up in South Africa under apartheid, and that experience has guided her scholarship, which focuses on decolonization and research and building diverse communities of practice through critical engaged inquiry.



FROM GEORGIA SOUTHERN TO TESLA

Georgia Southern graduate Gracia Dardano graduated last December and two months later had a job at Tesla.

Dardano is an associate manufacturing engineer at Tesla's new cell battery engineering facility in Austin, Texas. Originally from El Salvador, Dardano earned her bachelor's in mechanical engineering, and then started her new job Feb. 8. The Honors College graduate conducted her honors thesis research on airborne nanoparticle filtration under the mentorship of Aniruddha Mitra, Ph.D., P.E., professor of mechanical engineering. In the project, she helped analyze the effects of nanoparticles on the health of workers in welding shops and construction environments.

"Gracia is an extremely talented and committed individual, yet very friendly and social," Mitra said. "She is an asset to any research group. I am not surprised that she landed up with such a nice job."

Before she graduated with a 3.99 cumulative GPA, Dardano served as the president of the local student chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).

GEORGIA SOUTHERN OPENS NEW ENGINEERING AND RESEARCH BUILDING

Georgia Southern University's new \$60 million Engineering and Research Building is officially open on the Statesboro Campus. The building is home to the manufacturing engineering program and for use by other engineering disciplines in the University's Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing.

The facility will serve as the epicenter for engineering excellence and innovation in southeast Georgia. The ribbon-cutting ceremony featured University President Kyle Marrero, Regents C. Everett Kennedy III and Don Waters, Georgia Southern student and ROTC cadet James Miles, Georgia House Majority Leader Jon Burns and Georgia Power President Chris Womack. A robot delivered scissors to the president to use in the ribbon-cutting, then another robot programmed by students and faculty of the manufacturing engineering department helped to cut the ribbon.

"The Engineering and Research Building will greatly enhance our research capabilities as well as opportunities for our faculty to engage students in hands-on research and teaching projects," said Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing Dean Mohammad

S. Davoud, Ph.D. "It will also increase our faculty's ability to develop collaborative research projects with local industry and agency partners."

The three-story building has 21 research spaces, classrooms, four conference rooms (one of which is sponsored by Georgia Power), 27 offices and a 1,500-square-foot colloquium space with a 500-square-foot balcony. This meeting space with sweeping views of campus is a flexible space for industry gatherings. Other features in the 140,625-square-foot facility include robotics and automated manufacturing labs, an industrial instrumentation and controls lab, a joining and welding lab and a renewable energy roof deck for solar, wind and weather projects. It also boasts of one of the Southeast's only class 3 cleanrooms. The cleanroom, valued at \$700,000, is used for manufacturing or scientific research that requires an environment with very low levels of pollutants such as dust, microbes, vapors or aerosol particles.

The building is located at the corner of Akins Boulevard and Forest Drive on the Statesboro Campus.



Regent Don Waters, Regent C. Everett Kennedy III; Cadet James Miles; Georgia House Majority Leader Jon Burns; Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero; Dean of the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing Mohammad S. Davoud, Ph.D.; Georgia Power President Chris Womack; Georgia Sen. Billy Hickman; and Georgia Rep. Butch Parrish cut the ribbon on the new Engineering and Research Building.

TRUE BLUE SPOTLIGHT



Professor Anne Katz, Ph.D.

BUILDING COMMUNITY TIES

Connecting pre-service educators to the local community is important to Georgia Southern University College of Education Associate Professor Anne Katz, Ph.D. The Department of Curriculum, Foundations and Reading professor not only inspires her students to learn, but also inspires them to help others. In her fall 2020 READ 3231: Early Language and Literacy Development class, Katz asked students to create original family literacy kits for Savannah area households.

"The research-based activities corresponded with diverse children's books to benefit family literacy initiatives at a local community center," she explained. "In each project, students included a detailed letter to the parents/caregivers, materials and instructions for the activity, including step-by-step procedures. The idea was to nurture critical thinking through prompts and discussion questions, encourage vocabulary and writing connections, and provide ideas for extensions of the activity."

Early childhood education major Alexandria Sledge is one of the students who assembled a kit. Her project was based on a book focused on a young girl's recollections of her beloved grandpa. Sledge included a range of discussion and writing activities, some including poetry and visual literacy connections, inspired by the book's writing and illustration style. The junior stated the activity motivated her to step into her creative side to help families in the community.

"My activity called for families to think of family members who may have recently passed and create a memory journal to mark those good times they shared with them," she noted. "I decided to handmake the journal because a store-bought journal doesn't bring the same feeling as one made from the heart. I used different stencils, colored paper and ribbon, all provided by the teacher resource center here on the Armstrong Campus."

Justin Hanson is an interdisciplinary studies education major. He appreciated Katz's enthusiasm for teaching, and for creating learning experiences that allow students to serve others.

"I worked hard in developing my kit because I knew that they would actually be used by kids and parents in our community," he stated. "I researched ways to reach a diverse learning group. In the class, we were able to interact with students (in the community) virtually, and I planned based upon those interactions. I wanted to provide a product that most anyone would find useful and that could be used again and again."

Hanson, who is from St. Paul, Minnesota, is planning for a career as a high school history teacher.

"Dr. Katz applies real-world assignments to her curriculum," he noted. "You are not just going to make a project for a grade in her class; you are going to make a difference."

Katz said the University-community center partnership aims to bridge theory with practice for Georgia Southern students in the College of Education.

"It simultaneously provides parents and caregivers with tools that will enable them to create high-quality early learning environments for their children," she said. "Providing parents with strategies and resources to design meaningful early learning experiences at home will prepare students to be active participants in language and literacy learning when they enter formal schooling, optimizing children's academic and personal success."

Katz has been implementing this partnership for several years and will continue with the initiative in future semesters.

- SANDRA BENNETT



Pictured: Alexandria Sledge (top) and Justin Hanson (bottom)

SABA JALLOW

*Touching Lives for
32 Years*

Thirty-two years is a long time to work at one university, but it's been a joyous time for Saba Jallow, Ph.D.

"The joy has been in meeting people, especially students, helping them celebrate diversity and walk in other people's shoes, seeing students graduate and become successful," said Jallow.

As an associate professor in Georgia Southern's Department of Political Science, Jallow was one of the founders and past director of the Center for Africana Studies. He is retiring this year.

MODEL AFRICAN UNION

Born in the Republic of Gambia in West Africa, Jallow is known as an expert on Africa and world politics. He pioneered the Southeast Model African Union (SEMAU), held annually by the University System of Georgia's Africa Council. SEMAU is a simulation of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

"During this simulation, students are given the opportunity to meet ambassadors from the AU and craft resolutions, which are designed to solve specific problems," said Jallow. "The students write the resolutions, debate them and go through the frustration of trying to gain agreement. I think it changes them and informs them more than the classroom itself."

Georgia Southern students indeed have been changed, and many of his former students credit Jallow with inspiring them toward productive careers.

"At Georgia Southern, Dr. Jallow sparked my interest in all things Africa and world politics," said Nebiyu Feleke ('93, '95), resident legal advisor for the U.S. Department of Justice at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia. "When I was a federal prosecutor in D.C., he often brought his student delegates to my house for a meal and roundtable political discussions. Now, I'm stationed in Addis Ababa, headquarters of the AU. Not a day goes by that I don't think of Dr. Jallow."

Delegations and international students also attend the International Model African Union (IMAU), an initiative of Howard University in collaboration with the African Union Mission in Washington, D.C.

"When we attend SEMAU and the international conference, American students become closer to the problems that African countries go through in real time, and then make recommendations to those governments," said Jallow. "The director of the international model shares the information with Addis Ababa. The ambassadors tell us they have actually utilized the proposals the students have made."

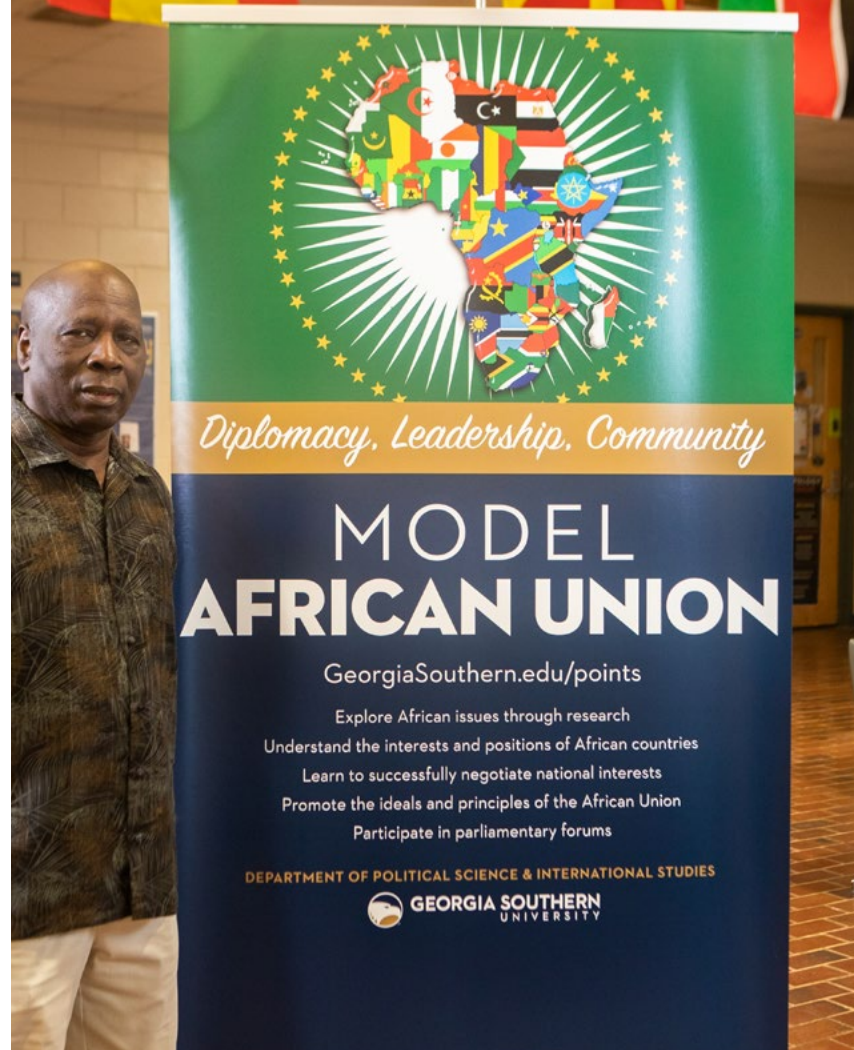
IMPACTING THE LIVES OF STUDENTS

It is easy to sense the admiration of students who have been lucky enough to take his classes.

"I was a sophomore still trying to find my place at Georgia Southern when divine intervention stepped in and I ended up in Dr. Jallow's international politics class," said Adrienne McCollar ('04, '07), director of the Division of Facility Services at Georgia Southern. "Entering Saba's class I just hoped for an 'A' to boost my GPA. What I got was a brain to pick, an ear to listen and a push in the right direction. I also found my forever love, [Statesboro] Mayor Jonathan McCollar, while preparing to be a delegate for the Model African Union."

Students who didn't have him in class, but participated in SEMAU and IMAU felt his impact too.

"Quite honestly, Dr. Saba Jallow has been one of the greatest influences in my life," said Dylan John ('16, '18), former Georgia Southern SGA president, now working for Piedmont Construction Group. "Dr. Jallow's dedication cannot be sufficiently captured if you have not seen his dynamism, commitment and influence over countless students across the nation through his leadership in the Model African Union."



Former students, from attorneys to government officials to diplomats, all acknowledge Jallow's influence on their life success.

"Saba Jallow led the charge to ensure students of color and those from around the world found a safe space at Georgia Southern where they could flourish," said the Rev. Francys Johnson, J.D. ('01). "He measures his success in lives touched, careers advanced and the improvement of the human condition."

"Dr. Saba Jallow can be described best as a teacher, a true mentor and leader," said Sheila Francois, J.D. ('15). "He helped me realize my passion for community activism, and solidified my interest in becoming a lawyer."

Likewise, recent graduates are profoundly affected by the consistent aura of goodwill that emanates from Jallow.

"Nothing could describe how dedicated, optimistic, approachable and encouraging Dr. Jallow is," said Berenice Zundi, a May 2021 graduate in professional communication and leadership. "He is always willing and ready to provide advice and motivation to anyone."

Jallow plans to stay busy in retirement, including frequent trips to Africa.

"Since my wife [Renata Newbill-Jallow] is still the chief public defender for the Ogeechee Circuit, when we get time we'll be going to Africa and coming back to Statesboro, engaging the community at large, here and in Africa," he said.

When asked what he would like his students to remember about him, Jallow shares his lifelong philosophy.

"Life is a journey, you take it as it comes. But you do your best to make sure that you can achieve your goals. And if there are difficulties, know that people will help you, just like you would help them if you had the opportunity to do so. We all have to work as a team to sustain society at large, and in the process, improve the human condition."

— LIZ WALKER

★ A CALLING TO SERVE ★

Alumna Blazes a Trail in the U.S. Army



Brig. Gen. Brown says this is one of her favorite photos. It was taken after she reunited with her family from a deployment to Afghanistan.

Jacqueline “Denise” McPhail Brown (’92) is a perfect example of what’s possible with a Georgia Southern education. When Brown first arrived on campus, she had no plans to follow in the footsteps of her father, who served in the military. As a first-year student, her entry into the ROTC happened by chance.

“I joined ROTC almost unintentionally,” said Brown. “My freshman year, I signed up for a mountaineering class. I did not realize it was an ROTC class, but I fell in love [with ROTC] starting with that mountaineering class.”

That ROTC class was followed by a few more and before long, Brown realized she had found where she belonged.

“Georgia Southern is what led me to find my career and calling,” said Brown. “The

ROTC Cadre’s caring and involved leadership and the comradery made an impression on me, and I knew I had found my place.”

Brown not only thrived in the ROTC; she has thrived in her decades of service in the United States Army. Today, she is a brigadier general and the J6/Director of Command, Control, Communications and Cyber for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). Headquartered in Hawaii, USINDOPACOM includes 380,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Department of Defense civilians and is responsible for all U.S. military activities in the Indo-Pacific covering 36 nations and more than 50% of the world’s population.

“It’s humbling to be a general officer in the U.S. Army, because it brings with it insight

into the challenges our nation is facing, and the work we need to do,” she said.

COLLEGE MEMORIES

Brown, a business major in production and operations management, lived most of her childhood years in Austell, Georgia. She was active in Girl Scouts, church and little league sports. In high school, she was a varsity athlete and for a time, the school mascot. Her love of sports is what brought her to Georgia Southern. Impressed with the “spirited athletics program,” Brown joined the volleyball team. Some of her favorite memories as an Eagle are connected to the football championship games including the memorable “Hugo Bowl.”

“I was actually a member of the color guard



for that game," said Brown. "There's nothing like holding a weapon or a flag in a hurricane. It's a great memory."

A charter member of the University's Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, the alumna acknowledged the important role Georgia Southern has played in her life.

"The professors at Georgia Southern had a profound impact on me, because of the subjects they taught, but also because of their consistent patience and dedication to my education," she said, singling out the ROTC instructors who helped keep her grounded and pushed her to achieve her goals. "And most importantly of all, Georgia Southern is where I met my husband, Chris, and today we are approaching our 29th wedding anniversary."

Once Brown received her commission through the ROTC, she headed to Fort Gordon near Augusta, Georgia, to complete her signal training. She spent her first military tour at Fort Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska.

"That was a shock to the system," she said. "I don't think I have ever been that cold in my life, but I absolutely loved it. Coming from a warm climate like Georgia, it took me quite a while to get acclimated, and I spent my first year there overdressed for everything."

CLIMBING THE RANKS

The general's 28-year military career has included a variety of command positions in deployments around the world, which

include three combat tours and multiple tours in Washington, D.C. In assignments at the Pentagon, she worked with the Army staff and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She is currently on her second tour in Hawaii where she leads a team that plans and directs communications and cyberspace operations for the Joint Force to drive operational success in those domains in the Pacific region.

"I think the greatest satisfaction I've experienced in my career has come from experiences that were the results of the shared success of teams, both when I served as a member and when I served as a leader of those teams," she said. "Most memorable are my two deployments to Iraq with the 3rd Signal Brigade out of Fort Hood, Texas, and my deployment to Afghanistan with the 307th Expeditionary Signal Battalion from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii."

Brown says the military's comradeship and the culture influenced her decision to build a career in the Army. While her promotion to brigadier general was a result of years of discipline and commitment, she noted her military service did not come without challenges.

"While the deployments I mentioned have been the highlights of my career," she said. "They've also been the most challenging personally, because they required me to be separated from my family for long periods of

of service members and civilians working for me or alongside me," the general said. "So, when I think of each award that I received, I think of the teammates and the team effort that it was awarded for."

Brown called it an honor to serve and is grateful for all the opportunities the Army has given her. She emphasized it offers a wealth of opportunities to Georgia Southern students, particularly women, who want to follow her footsteps.

"There are career paths that women are pursuing that I don't think they would pursue if not for the military," she said. "For instance, take the young ladies that have recently graduated from the Army Ranger school. I'm not sure what the equivalent would be outside of the military for women to be able to do that. I think the military is a great place, not just for women, but I would say for all genders, ethnicities and races because it's a melting pot of our society, and an opportunity to build community on the sole basis of shared goals. The diversity in the military community builds diversity of thought, which helps every individual grow exponentially."

The general acknowledged that her journey to her leadership position would not have been

"I think the military is a great place, not just for women, but I would say for all genders, ethnicities and races because it's a melting pot of our society." ★

time. The most fulfilling aspect of a military career is being deployed, because it is when you put into practice the intensive training you have received over many years, but at the same time, it is the hardest part of the job because of how intensely you miss your family. Above all, the most difficult times are experiencing the loss of a soldier or their family members. It is heart-wrenching."

Brown holds two master's degrees — one in telecommunications management from Webster University and another in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

Her numerous military decorations and awards include the Bronze Star Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal and the NATO International Security Assistance Force Medal to name a few.

"Those awards are really a reflection of the achievements that resulted from the hard work

possible without the support of her husband, Chris, their two sons, Justin and Cade, and phenomenal mentors.

"My husband supported my pursuit of a military career at every step of the way, and my kids have been and continue to be good sports, treating every new assignment as a new adventure," she explained. "Without the support of my family, I do not think I would have had the success that I've had in the Army," and she explained, "When I talk about mentors, it's not just leaders that have served, it's soldiers and peers as well as civilians who are nonmilitary members who have shared their insight whenever I needed it. And finally, it's the leaders who took a chance with me, and gave me the opportunities to prove myself."

In her downtime, Brown spends time with her family and their two cats, Weezy and Smokey, rescued during the height of the pandemic.

— SANDRA BENNETT

RECOGNITION FOR EMERGING FIGURATIVE ARTIST

Alumna Wins Coveted Art Prize



Ayana Ross ('00) is having a breakout moment as an emerging artist. In May, she was named the winner of the \$50,000 biennial Bennett Prize, which attracted 674 entrants. It is the largest prize offered to female artists who paint in the figurative realist style — a style that features the human form in all its diversity. The prize, created in 2018, is funded by figurative realist art collectors Steven Alan Bennett and his wife Elaine Melotti Schmidt. Ross found out she was one of 10 finalists last fall.

"To ultimately receive the Bennett Prize is nothing short of a dream come true," Ross said. "I am beyond grateful for the gift of time and the opportunity to focus on my art full time and further my practice. I could never say thank you enough, so I will do what I do best, which is paint, and let my work be my deepest expression of gratitude."

Growing up, Ross excelled at drawing, and knew that she wanted to work artistically. That led her to plan for a future in fashion design. She earned her bachelor's in fashion merchandising and apparel design from Georgia Southern University, then headed to New York City. Ross landed a job as an assistant designer but soon moved back to Georgia.

"I was in New York when 9/11 occurred and that had a big impact on my life and my career goals," she explained. "I saw it happening because I was walking to work late that day. It became difficult for me to focus (after 9/11) sitting at a desk and trying to design prints. I was so young. It was just a challenging time for me."

Ross, who lives near Atlanta, changed careers, and began teaching. She went back to school for a master's degree and gained certification as an art teacher. She now teaches primarily in high schools.

"While I was teaching, I was also developing my craft," she said, "and I reconnected with my interest in pure art making like drawing and painting." For the last 10 years, she has been exhibiting and selling the artwork she creates at all hours in her home studio.

"I have early morning studio hours that typically start around 4:30 a.m.," she noted. "I also work in the evenings, on weekends and during breaks."

The alumna lived her early years in Baxley, Georgia, before her family moved to middle



Georgia. The connection she feels to her roots in Baxley is often what inspires her paintings that pay homage to everyday individuals.

"I give a lot of credit to the Baxley roots, just because a lot of my work right now has imagery from that part of my life," Ross said.

The artist describes her figurative paintings as visually nostalgic. In her artist statement Ross explains her work highlights racial and gender disparities, and intergenerational mobility. She points out her figurative paintings are about more than the individuals visible within the picture plane, they acknowledge those unseen who, with tremendous effort and sacrifice, made the moment possible. In her classes at Georgia Southern, Ross spent many hours looking at prints, patterns and bold colors, which she now incorporates in her paintings.

"I like to tell stories in my work, so I have a lot of narrative types of painting that's reflective oftentimes on historical events within my family," Ross said. "But I have expanded more to historical issues within our society. What I try to focus on is my perspective of things as a woman, as a woman of color and looking at historical experiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic inspired a recent painting that she drew amid the debate of whether kids should have in-person or virtual school. It pictures a little girl in a cute dress and shoes, sitting at a table with her feet dangling, and around her is a fragmented space that could be pieces of a home or school.

"She is super focused on her work and it was inspired by a student," Ross said. "But it is really more about everything that got her there and the love and care of her, and of her mother in getting her dressed and groomed and prepared for doing her schoolwork, and being given that space whether it is school or home."

That piece is currently on view at the Muskegon Museum of Art (MMA) in Michigan, which also showcases the artwork of all the Bennett Prize finalists. The funds will help Ross create new pieces for a traveling exhibition of her work. The artist said she is grateful for the increased recognition that comes with the prestigious award.

"The Bennett Prize has quite a reputation, so having your artwork and your name associated with it is a huge honor," she said. "Recognition as a finalist alone opened a few doors for new opportunities and allowed me to connect with new collectors as well."

The mother of four added she is blessed to have the support of her husband, parents and other family members.

"I have had tremendous support from those that love me, and without them I don't know what things would look like now," she said.

— SANDRA BENNETT

KYLEE COLBY'S BIG IDEA

*Helping Veterans Connect
with Students*



Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the lack of direct contact with friends and loved ones was hard on older veterans staying in the community living center units (CLC) at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, Georgia.

Prior to graduating in May with a Bachelor of Science in Recreation and Tourism Management, Kylee Colby ('21) had an internship at the center. She could see the veterans were having a difficult time. So, she came up with an idea to help.

"I'm a military kid," said Colby. "And I was lucky enough to get to work with veterans as a recreational therapist for my internship. As part of it, I had to create a program that could be implemented with the veterans. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, there was a lot of social isolation happening with this specific population. It was very apparent that these veterans were struggling, not being able to spend time with friends and family."

THE IDEA OF PORTAL PALS

Colby came up with the idea of "Portal Pals," a play on the term "pen pals." Colby's program connected Georgia Southern students with individual veterans for weekly chats using Facebook Portal devices connected to large TVs in the CLC units.

"I saw the need to give the veterans a social outlet," explained Colby. "And by connecting students with these veterans, they were able to talk with someone to help reduce that social isolation feeling that they were having. I was easily able to find Georgia Southern students who were interested in participating."

"I continuously received text messages from the students that were involved in the program thanking me for the opportunity. They really enjoyed talking to their veterans every week. And they had great experiences. Through the calls, you could just see the veterans and students smiling throughout it."

INVOLVING STUDENTS

Danielle Berryhill, another recreation and tourism student who will complete her degree in August, was interested in participating.

"I was extremely excited to get involved because I wanted to give back to the veterans," said Berryhill who chats with an Army veteran. "At first it felt stilted, but now it just feels like a friendship more than an awkward conversation. We just talk about everything. Just having the conversation and hearing about the stories that he's experienced while serving. It's just nice to be able to give back to him because he has given up a lot."

"A common diagnosis of the veterans is Alzheimer's disease or dementia," said Colby. "Social isolation has a detrimental effect on that population. These calls have helped with that."

"I've never been someone who imagined myself working with older adults," said student volunteer Lauren Kress. "My veteran has dementia. I was kind of afraid to do this, thinking that I would feel really sad for him. But at the end of the call he'd say 'thanks for talking with me.' He gets so excited just for this weekly call. So, it's made me excited to call him every week, too."

The veterans aren't the only population that has benefitted from Portal Pals.

"It also benefits the students because they've gotten great exposure to the population of not only veterans, but the older adult population," said Colby. "And so this can be helpful for their future endeavors as far as finding jobs and having some things to talk about in interviews. It also counts as volunteer time going toward their degree."

SLOWING COGNITIVE DECLINE

Colby says the project had several objectives.

"We wanted to reduce the social isolation of the veterans, facilitate intergenerational learning between the veteran and the student, provide enjoyment to reduce the apathy or depressive symptoms and provide time for the veterans to reminisce. Reminiscing is a part of the cognitive stimulation that helps them not decline cognitively as quickly. Their memories from the past are easier for them to remember than more present memories."

As the facilitator of the program, Colby's role included observing the calls and jumping in if she saw a problem developing. She also gained valuable experience documenting the process and the results. She said documenting everything was crucial.

"One of our things we like to say is if you don't write it down, it didn't happen," said Colby.

Colby was amazed by the positive effects of the program on both the veterans and the student volunteers.

"I continuously received text messages from the students that were involved in the program thanking me for the opportunity. They really enjoyed talking to their veterans every week. And they had great experiences. Through the calls, you could just see the veterans and students smiling throughout it."

FUTURE FOR PORTAL PALS

Colby now has a job as a recreational therapist with Lighthouse Care Center of Augusta. Even though she is no longer there as an intern, the VA plans to continue her program.

"The VA therapists saw the benefits and want to continue Portal Pals," said Colby. "They have taken it over for me because they've enjoyed it, and they think that it's very beneficial to the veterans."

And when asked what she personally got out of the program, Colby quickly has an answer.

"Growing up as a military brat, I felt as if I was serving my community because I didn't have a hometown," explains Colby. "So my community is my hometown. And it's been really special to be part of it." — LIZ WALKER



A YEAR LATER

*Public Health Students
Reflect on the Pandemic*

As news of the COVID-19 outbreak intensified in early 2020, Gabi Wiggill, a sophomore in Georgia Southern University's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH), was rattled yet unaware of the international crisis to come or that her line of study would soon take center stage on an epic scale.

"The pandemic was not fun," she initially felt as the University moved to online classes in March. "None of us were even thinking yet about the devastation the pandemic would cost us in both human and economic loss."

One year later, following months of Zoom instructionals that explored the various determinants of disease in undergraduate and graduate epidemiology classes in real-time during a global health emergency, JPHCOPH professor Dr. Jian Zhang, DrPH, asked Wiggill and her peers to reflect on their experiences.

Zhang, who previously worked with the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was impressed with their responses. Startled by health inequities around the globe, the students were ultimately moved to continue their journeys in public health after witnessing the selflessness of health care workers, the triumph of the human spirit and expansive possibilities within science.

Trent Rundle, a senior in Introduction to Global Health, learned hard lessons in how fragile life is, particularly, he noted, for the people living in impoverished communities.

"Some of them were simply abandoned during the pandemic," he said. "Actions must be taken to address these deeply rooted social issues unveiled by the pandemic."

However, the breadth of kindness shown around the world maintained his faith in humanity. "Difficult times are also the times when we see who we really are," said Rundle. "It is so touching to see neighbors helping each other, sharing food, sharing water, sharing whatever they have."

Margaret Davies, a master's student in Zhang's Public Health Surveillance class, was dismayed by the political division created during the pandemic but marveled at the strength of health care's first responders.

"We should celebrate our heroic frontline health workers with more than cheers and applause," she said. "They sacrificed their lives, like soldiers on the frontlines of a battlefield, early in the pandemic when basic safety gear was severely in short supply."

Consequently, Davies became even more emboldened to pursue a meaningful and impactful career in public health so she can also make a difference in the lives of others.

The remarkable power of science left an impression on sophomore Chris Reyes.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, I thought I would have to go to school virtually for two to three years," he said. "I didn't think I would have a chance to get back to normal college life. It is truly amazing that we can develop, test and administer effective vaccines within one year. Science will get us out of this terrible pandemic."

In a continuum of firsthand learning, 32 JPHCOPH students and 20 faculty and staff members volunteered to assist with Georgia Southern's robust vaccination efforts that included on-campus, COVID-19 vaccine point-of-dispensing sites for faculty, staff and student populations beginning in the spring.

JPHCOPH Dean Stuart Tedders, Ph.D., is proud of the students and faculty, who took on the task of teaching in real time during a global public health emergency.

Our students have been able to gain real-world experience, and they have had opportunities to be a part of the response, through research, community education and participation in the University's



Top to bottom: Gabi Wiggill, Margaret Davies, Trent Rundle

vaccination efforts," he said. "We don't know when the next pandemic is coming, but we know it will. It's our commitment to train the future public health leaders to face the challenges head-on, to learn from success and failure, and always to be better prepared for the next one." — MELANIE SIMÓN



Artist rendering of Hinesville Business Incubator

BIG IS GETTING BIGGER

\$3.5 Million in Grants Speeds Expansion

Did you think businesses could grow and expand during the COVID-19 pandemic? That's exactly what's been happening with the Business Innovation Group (BIG) at Georgia Southern University.

"We initially saw a big shock," said Dominique Halaby, DPA, director of BIG. "Then the tide turned dramatically as people started to adjust to a new way of life in developing new business ideas. And we were trying to figure out how we could help them navigate this turbulent environment. So we've seen an influx of businesses coming in. We didn't necessarily anticipate that."

The growth of BIG during the pandemic showed that innovation is alive and well at Georgia Southern and southeast Georgia as a whole.

BIG is gearing up to help even more businesses as they have received two large Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Written by Halaby, each of those grant proposals required matching funds from the cities or counties in which they were located.

HINESVILLE BUSINESS INCUBATOR

For the Hinesville Business Incubator, the City of Hinesville Development Authority provided the \$750,000 cash match to the EDA grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce of \$750,000.

"This \$1.5 million project will allow us to build a 5,000 square-foot



President Marrero at the Statesboro grant announcement.

facility right across the street from our Liberty Campus and directly across the other street from the Hinesville Library,” said Halaby. “The neat thing is that this creates a kind of ‘campus feel’ to the area. It will really be a great environment to cultivate new entrepreneurs, give people the support that they need to ultimately be successful in their new business.”

The Hinesville incubator will specialize in engaging with the military, the Department of Defense and the procurement process with the federal government. It also will assist retired veterans and trailing spouses of service members stationed at Fort Stewart.

“We really want to cater this to the military community,” said Halaby. “Not just the veterans, but also their families, as well as people who are trying to cultivate businesses to contract with the military directly. So, this is a great way that we can be of value-add to the people that have given so much in defense of our country.”

Even though the incubator in Hinesville will not be completed for approximately 18 months, BIG is already providing some services to the Liberty County area, and interest keeps growing.

“We are already getting a steady stream of referrals for new businesses wanting assistance,” said Halaby. “So although we don’t have a footprint in Hinesville right now, we can connect them through our virtual component. And we enable them to access our students for internships, our faculty expertise, our research base, our connection through the coastal Georgia Small Business Development Center. Once we have the building built out and actually in play, it takes it to a whole different level.”

GEORGIA GROWN INNOVATION CENTER

The Georgia Grown Innovation Center new business incubator in Metter, Georgia, has been operational since last September. Through a partnership with the Georgia Department of Agriculture’s Georgia Grown initiative and the City of Metter, the incubator focuses on the agriculture sector. Originally targeted to have 10 businesses housed within the space by the end of the first year, the incubator has grown tremendously.

“We’ve been very surprised at how much faster that facility has grown,” said Halaby. “We’re way ahead of schedule in terms of businesses joining the incubator. At six months in, we were already at 15 businesses. So when you think about a pandemic, you kind of think, ‘Oh no, this is going to be terrible.’ And it was initially, but the ramp up, the rebound has just been absolutely remarkable.”

STATESBORO CITY CENTER

Statesboro is not standing still while Metter and Hinesville are expanding. The Downtown Statesboro Development Authority also received a \$2 million grant from the EDA to continue boosting business growth and resiliency efforts by expanding the City Center Business Incubator in Statesboro. This is part of the original feasibility study for Statesboro done in 2011 and updated each year. The City of Statesboro also committed \$500,000 to expand the facility.

“One of the things that really excites me about this space is the educational dynamics to it,” said Halaby. “Because of the way this facility is structured and in partnership with the city, it’s going to allow us to create a ‘mini-civic center’ so that we can have small scale conferences, primarily business-centered or community-centered events right here in our space downtown.”

The expanded facility will allow BIG to cater to a different clientele and to provide services via the mini-civic center that Statesboro and Bulloch County have been asking for. It will also be a beautiful marker for downtown Statesboro.

“I think that we’ve seen more enthusiasm from community leaders

in terms of the value that our University is bringing to downtown,” said Halaby. “People are seeing what was an empty building go through this new sense of life and beautification as a strong prominent thoroughfare into downtown.”

Everything does seem bigger with BIG. –LIZ WALKER



Above: Georgia Grown Innovation Center in Metter.

Below: Teresa Lytle of Southern Soy Candle shows off her Georgia Grown products.



BEHIND THE SCENES WITH GABRIELLE SCOTT

Theatre Student Makes Magic Backstage



Gabrielle Scott is living her dream as a student in the Georgia Southern theatre program. She has felt at home on the stage since her early days as a child dancer and musical theatre performer. But these days, she prefers working behind the scenes on live theatre productions.

"I love organization and I love the creation of art from behind the scenes and not just on stage," said Scott, who has enjoyed her role as a production assistant on several shows. "I love learning how things work and how strings are pulled. My organizational skills and my love for theatre and art have come together in stage management."

Scott, who is from Alpharetta, Georgia, said production stage management is all about solving problems and dispensing information to all interested parties from the minute a production begins to the minute it ends. With an eye for detail, she charts everything to make sure everyone has "everything they need to be able to create a beautiful masterpiece." As Scott explained, she is the main communication hub.

"Whether that's answering questions and providing information or coming up with creative solutions to complicated problems - I do my best to be a part of an amazing process," she said.

The double major in theatre, and women's,

gender and sexuality studies has made the best of her time at Georgia Southern. She is president of Alpha Psi Omega, the theatre honors society on the Statesboro Campus, and while her two majors may seem different, to her, they are intertwined. In explaining it, Scott referred to efforts in the theatre world to make sure the voices of people of color are valued and heard the same way as the voices of white creators and artists.

"My big thing is wanting to create room for people like myself, Black women, women of color, women in general, anyone whose voices have typically been snuffed out," she said. "And I can only come from one perspective, which is being a Black woman, and that means I have to learn about the other struggles that people go through in order to help create more space and help amplify their voices for this cause."

Scott is a recipient of several impressive scholarships. She is the second student to receive the Mical Whitaker Scholarship for the Study of African American Theatre, which honors Georgia Southern's first Black theatre instructor. She is among the first 15 people selected for the inaugural Cody Renard Richard Scholarship program. Established by the veteran Broadway stage manager in partnership with the Broadway Advocacy Coalition, the national scholarship is awarded





to Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latino students preparing for behind-the-scenes careers. Scott also received a Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) Region 4 Stage Management Fellowship. The scholarships provide the theatre student with funds, training, professional mentoring, learning experiences and opportunities to connect with others in the field.

"They mean so many different things," she said. "It means that all my hard work and learning are paying off, which is exciting. There are times that I feel overwhelmed, but my professors, my family and my friends are reminding me that I have earned them, and this is only the beginning of what I am capable of," she added.

Scott's focus and passion for theatre has not gone unnoticed by Georgia Southern faculty.

Theatre Professor Kelly Berry said from Scott's first day on campus, she knew what she wanted to accomplish.

"Gabby came to GS with specific goals in mind, which is always great, and she really embraced the program's holistic approach to teaching theatre," he said. "She embraced all the different opportunities that were presented to her and she is becoming a well-rounded theatre artist, which will provide multiple opportunities upon graduation."

This summer, the rising senior is spending two months as a production assistant with the Utah Shakespeare Festival. Scott is sure the skills she has acquired at Georgia Southern have prepared her for her future career as a production stage manager, whether in theatre, concerts or larger venues.

— SANDRA BENNETT

BONDS FAMILY HONORED WITH EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Members of the College of Education and the Bulloch County community have donated funds to endow an undergraduate education scholarship in the name of two exceptional Georgia Southern University alumni. The Dr. Charles and Dr. Lella Bonds Scholarship, is available to students pursuing degrees in education.

Professor Emeritus Charles Bond was the first African American faculty member at Georgia Southern when he joined the University in 1972 as an instructor for the Right to Read program. Affectionately known by his students as the Reading Professor, he was also the first Black faculty member to earn tenure at Georgia Southern.

Lella Bonds earned an Education Specialist in Early Childhood Education degree at Georgia Southern and served as a demonstration teacher at the University's Marvin Pittman Laboratory School, where student teachers interned at the on-site lab school. She served as a mentor for early childhood pre-service teachers while also educating students of Bulloch County.

During their time as faculty members at the University, the Bonds served as advisors to student organizations including the Black Student Alliance and Greek chapters for minority students. They also wrote books and researched and documented historical aspects of Bulloch County. Today, they continue to serve the community's youth through their efforts with local organizations including Original First African Baptist Church.



STUDENT WINS \$25,000 CHICK-FIL-A SCHOLARSHIP

Rising junior Trevor Sconyers had no idea how a job at Chick-fil-A would change his life. Sconyers is from Lyons, Georgia, and is a front-of-house team leader and back-of-house team member at the Chick-fil-A in neighboring Vidalia. On March 17, he was a participant in what he thought was a virtual retreat with 11 other team members from across the country. But Georgia Southern alumnus and Chick-fil-A chairman and CEO Dan Cathy surprised the Zoom participants and announced each would receive a \$25,000 True Inspiration Scholarship through the Chick-fil-A Remarkable Futures Scholarships program.

"I was completely overwhelmed with emotion," Sconyers said. "I was so happy and excited, I burst into tears from the overwhelming thought that I was going to graduate college debt free."

Sconyers is majoring in accounting and has minors in communication studies and nonprofit management. He has overcome many challenges as he pursued his education. As a child, his mother was injured in a car accident and she spent several months in the hospital.

"After the recovery she became highly addicted to drugs, which subsequently led me to become a caretaker for my sister," said Sconyers, who is considering a career as a motivational speaker and an accountant. "I would like to use the story I have to inspire other youth that they can overcome their struggles, and I would also like to explore accounting as it would create a very stable lifestyle, something I have never had."

The scholarship winner loves his job and said he never goes a day without feeling cared for or appreciated.

"I handle the daily operations of the business including taking orders, making food and serving guests," he explained. "When I lead the team, I am in charge of managing daily operations through running breaks, putting people in positions, making setups for the day and overall, inspiring the team."

Sconyers balances classes with a four-day work schedule. He commutes an hour from his hometown to the Statesboro Campus, but that could change this fall.

"With this scholarship, if everything works out with housing and hopefully working at the Chick-fil-A on campus, I hope to move to Statesboro to relieve some of the stress of commuting," he said.

When he graduated from Toombs County High School, Sconyers had accumulated 36 hours of dual enrollment at Southeastern Technical College. He expects to graduate from Georgia Southern in 2023. — SANDRA BENNETT



STUDENTS LEARN THE BUSINESS OF MUSIC

New Degree Takes Advantage of Savannah's Thriving Music Scene

Beginning fall 2021, the first cohort of students in the Bachelor of Arts in Music with a concentration in music industry, will begin their studies at the Georgia Southern Armstrong Campus in Savannah. The program emphasizes both music technology and music management skills, with flexibility for students who are more interested in one area than the other.

"I had always wanted us to have a distinctive program because every school offers music education and music performance," said Stephen Primatic, DMA, one of the organizers of the new program. "You can go to any school almost anywhere and get those degrees. But I always thought we should have had something a bit more modern."

Steven Harper, Ph.D., chair of the Fred and Dinah Gretsch School of Music, said the idea had been simmering for quite a while.

"We would get lots of inquiries about a music tech or music business degree," said Harper. "We would have to say, 'No. Afraid not.' There were a lot of people we weren't serving and we weren't therefore having an impact on the region the way we're supposed to, educationally or economically."

With the arrival of President Kyle Marrero, however, there was an opportunity to retool the Armstrong Campus with a different degree for a different audience — designed specifically for the Savannah market and its thriving music scene.

The accredited program takes advantage of the skills in the current music faculty on the Armstrong Campus, where professors have extensive experience in theory, composition, technology and more. Due to the generous Gretsch naming gift to the music program, a search is also underway for a Distinguished Scholar in Guitar and Music Industry who will serve as the new head of the program.

"The 21st century musician has to be an entrepreneur and has to be adaptable," said Harper. "We want them to have technology skills, business skills and performing skills so that wherever they want to go, they can talk meaningfully to people in those other areas."

Georgia Southern has a broad range of minors from which students in the new music degree can choose, making the degree even more valuable.

Also on the table are strategic relationships with Savannah area music businesses.

"Benedetto Guitars and Randy Wood Guitars are here," said Primatic. "Jody Jazz Mouthpieces is here. There's the Savannah



Philharmonic and there is the Hilton Head Orchestra, Savannah Jazz Festival, Coastal Jazz, Savannah Music Festival and of course Gretsch. We'll be bringing people in to talk with our students and we'll be setting up internships with them as well."

So far, recruitment is going better than expected. The new students will pursue a music degree that's flexible enough to focus on what interests them, but prepares them for the current state of the music industry.

Harper is very excited about the new degree.

"Now, with the prestige of the Gretsch name, we are building something unique to the state and very attractive to students. The idea is to see who we have and what they're interested in. We'll give them an experience that they'll find meaningful and that they can build into successful careers." — LIZ WALKER



RESEARCHING SALT MARSH HABITAT LOSS

Graduate Student Leads Project in Conjunction with Sustainable Aquaponics Research Center



Salt marshes in south Georgia are in constant need of restoration due to rising sea levels. Georgia Southern University graduate student Alexander Gregory is leading a project on the Armstrong Campus to address the loss of marsh habitats by researching *Spartina alterniflora*, the dominant plant in Georgia salt marshes.

Gregory, along with Sustainable Aquaponics Research Center (SARC) Senior Scientist Heather Joesting, Ph.D., is building an aquaponics garden to research the ideal growth conditions of *Spartina* and eventually become the first producer of locally grown *Spartina* for coastal marsh restoration projects.

"When you look out into the marsh, you see a sea of green - and most of that green is *Spartina*. Being a plant in the salt marsh is tough - the soil is salty with very little oxygen and the daily tides create a cycle of inundation and exposure," said Joesting. "*Spartina* has developed some very unique adaptations to 'tolerate' these stresses, and as such is one of the only plant species that can grow in these habitats."

The professor explained that *Spartina* is often planted as part of salt marsh restoration projects to stabilize and capture sediment. However, there is no local source in Georgia for the plants so coastal managers have to purchase them from out-of-state plant nurseries.

"Salt marsh habitats provide numerous ecosystem services, including coastal protection from storms, carbon sequestration and maintenance of commercial fisheries," she stated. "*Spartina* is critical in stabilizing and accumulating sediment to facilitate marsh horizontal and vertical growth."

Like the current aquaponics garden on the Armstrong Campus in Savannah that is used to grow vegetables, the garden in this project uses fish waste to fertilize the *Spartina*, which is grown in water. The water is then cleaned by the plants and recirculated into the fish tank. Due to the versatility of *Spartina*, the garden will be able to use freshwater or marine fish in the growing process, which will cut the cost of buying salt to maintain fish growing conditions in marine aquaculture. The project, which encompasses a multitude of scientific

disciplines and research techniques, has so far provided seven undergraduate research students with experience in field and lab data collection, as well as other research skills that will be relevant to their post-graduation goals.

"This project incorporates information I've learned in courses like organic chemistry, plant biology and microbiology, just to name a few," said Gregory. "There are so many organisms involved in this project, which is key to ecology. We want to understand all of the abiotic and biotic factors that are interacting to create the conditions we see. The knowledge that I brought with me at the beginning of this project pales in comparison to the knowledge I have gained actively planning and executing the work for it."

While the research on the *Spartina* garden has been going on since last fall, the work is continuing this summer. The team is currently monitoring plant survival and completing the fish-garden recirculating system at the aquaponics facility on the Armstrong Campus. The researchers are also collecting data in the garden and completing analyses in the lab.

Gregory said the project has the potential to make a large impact on various scientific industries, such as conservation, living shorelines, aquaculture, traditional nursery practices, environmental biology and chemistry. He hopes to use the multidisciplinary aspects of the project in the next step of his professional or academic career.

"I think this project will have some pretty big implications for conservation of our salt marshes in Georgia and the economic and environmental costs of aquaculture," Gregory said. "I think that the way this project ties together so many different threads is really amazing. I hope by the end of this project I have touched on and used competencies from many of these fields so that I can either get into a Ph.D. program or make myself a strong contender for the jobs that are out there." — KYLE DAWSON

Georgia Southern graduate student Alexander Gregory does field research on Spartina in Savannah.



2021 AVERITT AWARD WINNERS

Four Graduate Students Receive Top Honor

Georgia Southern graduate students teach, grade assignments, run laboratories, conduct their own research, and write and publish complex papers. But too often their academic achievements go uncelebrated. Meet the four graduate students who won the Averitt Award this year. It is the highest honor presented to graduate students within the Georgia Southern University Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies. The award recognizes excellence in two separate categories — instruction and research.

EXCELLENCE IN INSTRUCTION SCHOLARS



CYDNEY PRICE
*Master of Arts
 Graduate
 College of Arts and
 Humanities*

Hometown:

Kennesaw, Georgia

Major: English Literature

What did you teach?

World Literature II to mostly sophomores, although I had some of everyone in my classes.

What did you enjoy about teaching?

One of my favorite things about teaching so far is discovering that each one of my students is absolutely brilliant. They each come from different backgrounds and with different skill sets, so

seeing them come together and interpret texts in the ways they do is amazing. Also, it's always so encouraging when I get the privilege to teach them something they'll remember for the rest of their lives. They teach me just as much as I teach them, and I couldn't see myself doing anything else.

What did you learn about yourself at Georgia Southern?

I learned that I love teaching. Before graduate school, I never thought I wanted to be lecturing in front of students. After stepping one foot in my classroom, I knew I was supposed to be a teacher.

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

It's been fun in a lot of ways, challenging in others. I'm sad to leave the place that's been my home for six years, but I'm much more excited to see what my mid-20s has in store for me.

What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

It was an honor to even find out I was nominated for the award. Being formally recognized for something you love doing is incredibly rewarding. Teaching is so much a part of my life now that it feels odd to be awarded for it, but also really, really great.

What are your career plans?

I plan to join the 2021 Teach for America corps. I will be teaching 6th grade English Language Arts with this organization.



BRADLY MCGINNIS
*Master of Science Graduate
 College of Behavioral and Social Sciences*

Hometown: Columbus, Georgia

Major: Experimental Psychology

What did you teach?

Research and Analysis 1 and Introduction to Psychology

What did you enjoy about teaching?

I've enjoyed seeing the moments when a student has learned a new concept. Watching them make connections to other material and to their own lives is a wonderful experience. Watching my students apply themselves and grow in their understanding has been the greatest experience in teaching.

What did you learn about yourself at Georgia Southern?

I learned that I love teaching. I come from a long line of teachers in my family, and I was surprised to learn I loved it too. I've learned that I love helping others succeed at their goals in the classroom and in their academic careers. I've also learned that I love to bake as well.

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

My Georgia Southern experience has been absolutely incredible. The amount of opportunities that are available here is astounding. I made sure that in my two years here I took every opportunity that was out there, and I have definitely grown from it. I couldn't have asked for a better school to attend.

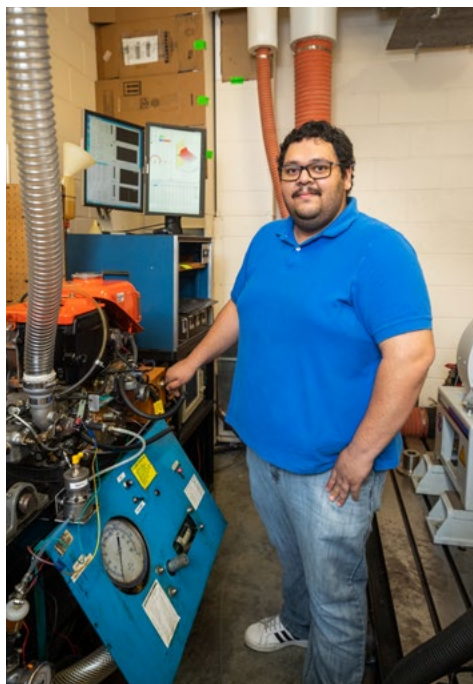
What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

It was such a surprise to learn that I won, and I am honored to have even been nominated by the department. Everything I do is for my students, and I cannot thank everyone who helped get me here enough. I am proud to be a lecturer at Georgia Southern.

What are your career plans?

I am working toward getting my Ph.D. in clinical psychology so that I can be a clinician in the future.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH SCHOLARS



CESAR CARAPIA

Master of Science Graduate
Allen E. Paulson College of
Engineering and Computing

Hometown: Douglasville, Georgia

What is the focus of your research?

To reduce the emissions emitted from diesel engines through the use of advanced combustion techniques and bio-fuels.

What did you learn about yourself at Georgia Southern?

My tenacity to keep moving forward even in the face of great adversity.

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

My Georgia Southern experience has been great, not only was I able to develop professionally thanks to my research mentor Dr. Valentin Soloiu, but also as a person through the friendships I made while here.

What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

It means a lot to be recognized for my work as it shows how far I have come from my humble beginnings. It means a lot to my family as well knowing that the hard work we put in to get me where I am today has started to bear fruit.

What are your career plans?

To become a great engineer in the automotive industry, and make an impact on society by creating safer and environmentally friendlier vehicles that are still fun to drive.



ERIN ARNESON

Master of Science Graduate
College of Science and Mathematics

Hometown: Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

What is the focus of your research?

The goal of my graduate research was to investigate the response of *Oculina arbuscula* to ocean acidification in the live-bottom reef ecosystem of coastal Georgia. *Oculina arbuscula* is a branching coral native to the Georgia coast and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS). This coral species plays an important role in the ecosystem, providing structural complexity to the reef housing nursery fish, crabs and other invertebrates. Using seawater chemistry data from the GRNMS monitoring program and elements trapped in the coral skeletons as they grow, I attained further data about the calcification process of *O. arbuscula* and how they are able to cope with current acidic conditions on the Georgia coast.

What did you learn about yourself at Georgia Southern?

Climate change, which is driven by excess carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, has been buffered by our oceans over the past 200 years. The ocean has absorbed ~30% of all CO₂ released from burning fossil fuels since the industrial revolution. The global change in seawater chemistry because of this absorption is known as ocean acidification. Ocean acidification is intensified by runoff pollution, deforestation and a number of other human induced factors, putting many marine organisms, ecosystems and the communities of people who depend on them at risk. Researching a topic deeply rooted in the human-environment connection has challenged me to learn about my values as a part of this interconnected web.

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

My experience in the biology program at Georgia Southern was positive first and foremost because of the friendships I made within the graduate student community. I am thankful for their support; for proofreading grant proposals, for helping me through setbacks, and for creative outlets like Dungeons and Dragons campaigns. I cannot stress enough the importance of community among graduate students.

What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

I am extremely grateful for the recognition of my research efforts. My research pursuits over the past three years stemmed from my commitment to protect the ecosystems of the Georgia coast, passion for ocean conservation and aspiration to educate future ocean stewards. The honor of receiving the Averitt Award has encouraged my future goals for using ocean acidification research to engage individuals with the health of their environment for the prosperity of communities and the earth.

What are your career plans?

My career goal is to utilize the science and communication skills gained as a graduate student at Georgia Southern to help build ecosystem and community resilience on our coast.

ALEX TROUTMAN

Conservation Biology Is For Everyone

As an undergraduate, Alex Troutman ('14) was unsure of his future career field. Little did he know that professors Ray Chandler, Ph.D., and Michelle Cawthorn, Ph.D., would have an impact on his destiny. Through field experiences in their classes, he discovered what it was like to be a wildlife biologist.

"When I first came to Georgia Southern, I was thinking about becoming a veterinarian, and then later considered teaching," he said. "But then I had experience in the field with Dr. Chandler's ornithology class and Dr. Cawthorn's mammalogy class, and those two classes made me realize that wildlife biology is definitely my passion."

A native of Austell, Georgia, Troutman received his undergraduate degree in biology from Georgia Southern University. After graduation,

he started his career as a conservation biologist, specializing in marine biology. He went to work with ZooAtlanta, Georgia Aquarium, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.

GRADUATE SCHOOL CHOICE

He was considering a different graduate school when he stopped in to meet with Professor Checo Colon Gaud, Ph.D., who asked him to apply to Georgia Southern.

"Dr. Checo understands what it takes as an underrepresented scientist to make it through academia," said Troutman. "And also he has some of the same life experiences as I do, being a minority in a predominantly white field. That was one of the reasons I chose to come



back to Georgia Southern, for him to lead me and guide me through this process.”

Troutman told Colon Gaud he would apply to Georgia Southern, but he still wasn't sure and kept stalling.

“I was out in the Gulf of Mexico on a dredging ship working as an endangered species observer for a consulting firm,” said Troutman. “And Dr. Checo emailed me and he said, ‘Hey, are you going to apply?’”

So Troutman quickly applied to the Master of Science in Biology program and received a teaching assistantship.

SEARCHING FOR FUNDING

His teaching assistantship provided funding for spring and fall semesters. But Troutman had to secure additional funding for the summer. In the summer months, Troutman focused his research on the diet of the seaside sparrow, a bird that lives in the tidal salt marshes, a semi-marine area, off the coast of Georgia.

To obtain funding for his research, he received an award from the Georgia Ornithological Society and won a very competitive fellowship with the Safina Center.

“Carl Safina is a writer and ecologist. He has a foundation that awarded me funding to do some of my research, but also to engage in community outreach,” said Troutman. “I’m trying to be the representation that I didn’t have as a young ‘wannabe scientist’ growing up. I loved guys like Steve Irwin and Jeff Corwin, but those guys didn’t look like me. There wasn’t any representation of anybody who looked like me doing wildlife biology and being a conservationist.”

SCIENCE FOR EVERYBODY

The science field in general is lacking in diversity, especially in the natural resources and outdoor fields. Troutman uses his #BlackAFinSTEM collective work, Black In Marine Science, Black Birder’s week and other Black In ‘X’ weeks to promote science for everybody. Most importantly, his selection as an early-career fellow with the Safina Center focuses on his ability to engage and encourage people of color and people of lower socioeconomic status to get involved in nature and the outdoors.

“So, Black In Marine Science came about to showcase and amplify black marine scientists’ voices,” said Troutman. “We also want to



encourage the younger generation to pursue marine science.”

Troutman designs and holds science programs for young people in person and online. He introduces natural resources and the outdoors to children that normally don’t have access to this kind of learning.

“Now, we have different programs like BIMS TV, which is Black In Marine Science TV,” said Troutman. “And we do small little snippets of programs that are for kids (BIMS Kids) and also the general public (BIMS Bites), where we break down marine science topics into bite-sized, understandable bits.”

After Troutman graduates in 2022, one of his future goals is to create a nonprofit organization specializing in bridging the gap into the natural resources field for people of color, and socioeconomically disadvantaged children. Troutman wants to contribute to the representation of that key demographic missing in the scientific field.

“The STEM Field should not just be geared toward the success of one particular people group,” said Troutman. “It should be geared toward success for everyone, Black, brown, white, anybody should be able to enjoy the outdoor STEM fields. We want to promote that everyone should be able to pursue any field they want to.”

— LIZ WALKER

RESEARCH BRIEFS

WATERS COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Students Use Simulation to Get Glimpse of Disability Complications

Students on the Armstrong Campus experienced firsthand the obstacles and issues older adults with disabilities go through after participating in a series of simulations. Forty-six students attended the event, which was led in person and on Zoom by Debra Hagerty, DNP, associate professor of nursing. She secured a Georgia Health Foundation grant to buy the equipment for the simulation.

Students were able to experience disabilities that were simulated during the sessions. Examples of the experiential learning included arthritis, back pain, hearing and vision loss, tinnitus, tremors, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, gait disturbance, kyphosis and hemiparesis. They donned arm, back and knee braces, gloves, special shoes, glasses and other equipment while trying to do normal tasks. Things such as walking, writing, sitting and standing, climbing stairs and stepping over obstacles such as puddles, throw rugs, and picking up objects off the floor were more difficult than anticipated and in some cases provided potential safety hazards to experience and navigate.

"I teach nursing leadership, but I have a passion for geriatric care," Hagerty said. "When nurses go through education, they don't get a lot of information about sensory issues and disabilities elders have or could have. We wanted to train students in disabilities and increase awareness in geriatric issues through a fun student event."

Students said experiencing the disabilities was powerful and helped them have a better understanding of geriatric issues. Hagerty said one of the goals for the event was to have students take what they learned from the simulations and apply it to their studies and future careers. She felt the students became more sensitive and aware of the needs of elders, and saw what growing older is like by experiencing similar conditions and disabilities.

PARKER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

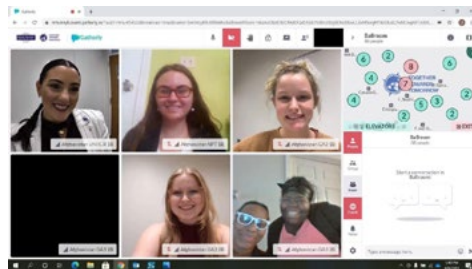
Dean Recognized as Top Business and Management Scientist

Allen Amason, Ph.D., dean of Georgia Southern's Parker College of Business, has been listed among the top business and management scientists in a study conducted by Stanford University researchers. Amason's teaching and consulting focuses on strategic management, strategic decision making and top management team processes. Of the 1,000 scholars listed in the business and management discipline, 11 were from Georgia. He is an award-winning executive educator, having been named Terry College of Business MBA Teacher of the Year three times and Terry College of Business Teacher of the Year in 2006.

In addition to authoring the textbook, *Strategic Management: From Theory to Practice*, Amason has published more than two dozen articles and book chapters, serves as associate editor of the *Journal of Management Studies*, is past senior associate editor of the *Journal of Management* and has served on the editorial boards of the *Academy of Management* journal and the *Journal of Management and Entrepreneurship, Theory & Practice*. As noted in the study, his total citation count is more than 9,800.

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

University's Model United Nations Team Earns Highest Honors at Virtual Conference



The Georgia Southern Model United Nations team once again has been recognized as an Outstanding Delegation at the National Model United Nations Conference. The University's program has a long history of success at this conference, and this marks the 10th year in a row that the Georgia Southern team has received the Outstanding Delegation award. Model U.N. is a program where college students play the role of

diplomats and ambassadors to the U.N. for various countries. The Georgia Southern team represented Afghanistan.

At the annual conference, students discuss and debate global issues affecting real people, but they must apply their academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to solve global problems. The conference builds research, public speaking, writing and negotiating skills. The University was also recognized for Outstanding Position Paper writing for the 19th time in 20 years, and Georgia Southern students were recognized in two committees as the most outstanding. A total of 14 Georgia Southern students participated in the conference.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Faculty Members Receive Research Award

Two Department of Communication Arts professors were recognized for their research at the Broadcast Education Association's (BEA) annual conference. The BEA honored Holly Cowart, Ph.D., and Jeffrey Riley, Ph.D., with the Diversity and Inclusion award for their paper "Framing a Movement: Media Portrayals of the George Floyd Protests on Twitter."

"We recognized the importance of the protests in calling out injustice," said Cowart. "By examining the portrayals of protesters and police, we gained a better understanding of how the events were interpreted." The BEA Diversity and Inclusion award recognizes a research paper that contributes to the academic knowledge in the field of diversity in media content, the media professions or the teaching of diversity topics or to diverse populations.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

NSF Grant of nearly \$300K to Teach Computer Science in Rural Schools



Associate Professor of Instructional Technology Mete Akcaoglu, Ph.D., has procured a nearly \$300,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that will expose children in the region to game-based computer design instruction. The NSF's Computer Science for All program (CSforAll) awarded the funds for Akcaoglu's grant proposal, "Developing and Piloting a Game Design-Based Computer Science Curriculum," or "Project GAME," which outlines the delivery of computer science education using game development software

into four regional middle schools in southeast Georgia.

Six teachers from Bulloch, Candler, Chatham and Screven counties are participating in the pilot program that kicked off last August. This fall, the teachers will pilot the curriculum with their first group of students, focusing on middle school students in mostly rural areas. Schools included in the program include STEAM Academy of Statesboro, DeRenne Middle School in Savannah, Metter Middle School and Screven Middle School. Students will focus on basic game creation and coding and build their skills throughout the course.

The teachers have received professional development to use and operate Unity, a cross-platform game engine that can create virtual reality and augmented reality games, simulations and other cinematic experiences. Unity has been used to create notable games such as Battlestar Galactica Online, Assassin's Creed Identity, Call of Duty, Angry Birds Epic, and Rick and Morty: Virtual Rick-ality.

"Introducing students to computer science in this way during middle school allows them exposure to a possible career as a computer scientist and the vast opportunities that can bring," said Akcaoglu. "While many of them may not choose to become a computer scientist, this will impact their thought process going forward and assist them in feeling comfortable approaching other coding and computer software that others would shy away from."

Co-principal investigators on the grant team include College of Education's Selçuk Doğan, Ph.D., assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, Charles Hodges, Ph.D., professor of instructional technology and Andrew Allen, Ph.D., an assistant professor of computer science in the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing.

The two-year grant project will culminate with an event that will showcase the games that students created during the pilot program. Akcaoglu says he envisions a day of students and families coming together to play the games created by the middle schoolers and celebrate their hard work and achievement.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

Professor Awarded Grant to Study African American Museums

Associate Professor of Geography, Amy Potter, Ph.D., has been awarded a \$75,000 National Science Foundation grant for the project, "The Role of Museums in the Landscape of Minority Representation." The research will explore how African American history and culture are presented at African American history museums, and the team will then work with each museum's staff to develop public engagement projects.

"This research will be among the first to survey the scope and breadth of how African American history and culture are presented at African American history museums based on regional histories, ownership types and management philosophies at museums in four geographic regions across the United States," Potter said. "By conducting fieldwork at museums in many states and cities, this project makes substantial strides to address this intellectual void."

Potter's research is part of a larger multi-university collaboration, Tourism RESET (Race, Ethnicity and Social Equity in Tourism), which seeks to challenge prevalent social inequities in the tourism industry.

JIANN-PING HSU COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health Education Soars in Wake of Pandemic

Department chair and Health Policy and Community Health Professor Gulzar Shah, Ph.D., authored an invited editorial in the March issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* (AJPH). In it, he wrote about the increased interest in the field of public health.

"For many of the 19 million college students enrolling annually in public and private colleges in the United States, public health is becoming a logical choice," he said. "Because of COVID-19, interest in public health careers is soaring, evident from the 20% increase nationwide in Master of Public Health applicants."

Shah also noted, "The emphasis on aligning public health practice and policy with the Public Health 3.0 framework, in which leaders partner across various sectors to address social, environmental and economic factors that affect population health and health inequity, has attracted the spotlight on generalist, behavioral education and health policy degrees. The Public Health 3.0 framework has also underscored the desirability of adopting the Health in All Policies approach and encouraging public health leaders to act as chief health strategists in influencing policies in other sectors affecting population health. Increasing focus on Health in All Policies and higher salary positions in health care may further explain the popularity of health policy and management and health law programs."

The editorial drew insights from the national data from the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health's member institutions about the first employment destinations of public health graduates as well as Shah's own studies on public health practice trends. Shah's research studies were based on two waves of the national-level Public Health Workforce Interest and Needs Survey.

ONE MORE TIME

Georgia Southern Cheerleaders Win Seventh National Title

It's been said that winning is a tradition at Georgia Southern University. As the 2021 National Cheerleaders Association reigning national champions, the Georgia Southern cheerleading program has a knack for keeping that tradition alive.

Since 2008, the cheerleading program has won seven national titles. The program's coed team holds one national title, and the all-girl team holds six, including the 2021 Intermediate All-Girl Division IA title.

So what does it take to produce a national championship-winning team?

For Barry Munkasy, Ph.D., head coach of the cheer program and associate professor of kinesiology at the University, the best thing is to trust the process.

"It's a process, and that process starts in August and it lasts nine months," he said. "I don't know exactly what I do that makes it work, but for me it's the process of teaching them and motivating them to cheer over the nine months that leads to their ability to perform at the national championships."

In fact, 2008 was the first year that Munkasy led the cheer program to the National Cheerleaders Association's national collegiate competition in Daytona Beach, Florida, and the first time the all-girl team won a national title.

"The first championship was a complete and utter surprise," he said. "We just went and did our best, and when our best was good enough, it was elation, but it was a lot of surprise, too."

Jessica Curran ('09, '11), who was captain of the first championship-winning, all-girl cheer team, still remembers the sense of pride she felt.

"Bringing home a national championship to your school is always something to be extremely proud of, but being the first team to do so, it absolutely gave me a sense of pride," said Curran.

"I am very proud to say that I am part of a winning legacy and tradition at Georgia Southern University. Traditions are something that the University takes pride in, and I can confidently say that the cheerleading program has a winning tradition."

To keep that tradition alive and to compete at such a high level requires mental and physical toughness, Munkasy said.

"It's a grind and it takes a lot of work to get through everything that you have to go through over the nine months or so," he said. "That process makes you mentally tough. At football games, they perform material that is relatively difficult, and they're required to do it perfectly. And so that process of requiring perfection, even during the football season, plays a role in what they do at nationals."

He also tries to establish a team-oriented mindset in members of both the coed and all-girl teams.

"You have to know that what you're doing isn't just for you," said Jaedah Wheeler, civil engineering graduate student and all-girl cheerleader. "You always have to be in the mindset to be better than



you were yesterday, and I have to make sure I'm not the one who is holding my team back because I am not in shape or can't perform a skill."

While helping these athletes on skill and technique, Munkasy finds reward in mentoring students in their adult life.

"I really feel like this is my opportunity to have a major impact on the students at the University on a day-to-day personal basis," he said. "As a professor, you provide them with the material that they need to know, but you don't often get to know them at a much stronger level. So with coaching, I get to see these people come in as freshmen and try to help them to become adults from a social and an athletic perspective. I enjoy seeing them become adults and graduate and be successful after they graduate."

Katherine Wagner, a marketing major and captain of the 2020-21 all-girl cheer team, has found structure and leadership opportunities through the cheer program.

"Cheer helps build character and hard work ethic, especially knowing that it's never really about just one person," she said. "You have to do your job to the best of your ability and trust that other people will do their job to the best of their ability."

Of course national champions face their fair share of challenges as well.

"There were definitely hardships," Wagner said. "It's never easy having to listen to all the different opinions and ways things could be done better. But at the end of the day, when everything does come together and your teammates figure out why you did things the way you did and they appreciate them, it just makes everything all that much more rewarding."

Being a cheerleader at Georgia Southern requires students to balance academics, 20 hours of practice per week, game attendance, work and social life. Because the cheer program isn't an NCAA sport and not fully funded by the University, the cheerleaders are also responsible for fundraising during the year through various events.

"There's no guarantee in any particular year that we're going to be able to compete," Munkasy said. "It's all based on the fundraising they do and the support that the community and alumni give us. A lot of people think cheerleaders are on scholarships, but they are not."

As a coach, Munkasy said time management, injuries and communication are standard challenges year to year. But coaching a team of national champions during a pandemic was a special task.

"They really had to focus on their personal health and their personal practices, and that made our practices and our work very difficult," he said.

Quarantine requirements, weekly testing and cheering from the stands at athletics events instead of on the sideline where many skills are practiced in preparation for nationals were unique trials in the process of preparing for nationals.

Most challenging of all, though, was when a teammate tested positive for COVID-19 a few weeks before nationals, resulting in a large quarantine and a loss of two weeks of practice.

"That was really devastating to us, so going into the competition we were just hoping for the best," Wheeler said. To the team's surprise, the challenges quickly faded upon resuming practice.

"I don't know what happened the week before nationals, but our team meshed and we became essentially a dream team overnight," Wheeler said. "We all communicated better, there were no big problems and it was the best team experience. I've been on plenty of teams but we have never had that type of chemistry before."

"They had never performed that routine that well until that day," Munkasy added. "They peaked at the right moment."

He added that a third place finish for the coed squad in the Intermediate Large Coed Division IA category was just as remarkable because four of the male team members had only been cheering since January when the team competed in April.

"That is a tremendous accomplishment for both teams," Munkasy said.

— CRISSIE ELRICK BATH



Georgia Southern Dance Team makes team history by performing in finals at national competition

In an unprecedented year, the Georgia Southern Dance Team made history in April when they performed in the Jazz Division 1A finals at the National Dance Alliance Collegiate Nationals competition in Daytona Beach, Florida. While the team was established in 1990 and has performed in the Division 1A Jazz competition since 2015, this was their first time performing in the finals.

In addition to working through a global pandemic, the team experienced a shift in leadership this year. Head coach Stephanie Viness had to step back while on maternity leave, and the team's new assistant coach, Rebekah Macker, stepped up to lead the team.

"I have been the coach for the last three years, but I wanted the team to have a consistent face this year," Viness said. "Rebekah had not been on the team prior, but she did a great job."

From changing routines to practicing in shifts, the team withstood and thrived through challenges. Remembering their nationals performance brought Macker to tears.

"It was electrifying," Macker said. "When they were about to go on stage, their intensity, their focus and their strength, it was almost palpable. I was extremely proud of them. They worked hard and knowing that they had the opportunity to perform at finals lit the fire more."

For Emma Vickers, third-year member and team marketing director, the experience of performing in the finals was incomparable.

"I was grateful to be able to compete this year," Vickers said. "I will never forget the feeling of representing Georgia Southern at nationals with my best friends and teammates."

— KAITLIN ANDERSON

EAGLES SOAR



Women's Tennis Fights Back from 3-1 Deficit to Win the Sun Belt Championship

The Georgia Southern women's tennis team capped an 11-game win streak with their first Sun Belt tournament title and first NCAA Championship appearance in school history.

The second-seeded Eagles overcame a 3-1 deficit, winning a pair of third-set matches to claim the 2021 Sun Belt Conference Tournament Championship with a 4-3 victory over East top seed South Alabama on April 18 at the Peachtree Tennis Center in Peachtree City, Georgia. Georgia Southern finished the season 19-8, a school-record, single-season win total. The Eagles tournament win also avenged a 4-1 loss to South Alabama in the 2019 Sun Belt Tournament Championship match.

"It's so good to see the team experience this, with so many fans and former players from both the men's and women's teams at Georgia Southern," said Head Coach Sean McCaffrey. "It was great to share that experience with them. This was really special. We started this, almost from scratch. In just four seasons, the women have done an amazing job. I'm proud of the team, and proud to be a part of Georgia Southern. This was their main goal at the beginning of the season, and they accomplished it. If things get in your way, you just have to stay true to the philosophy and the process, and amazing things can happen. Our women showed that today."

The Eagles tournament win was hard-fought. They claimed the doubles point to take an early 1-0 lead. Sonja Keranen and Elizabeth Goines picked up a 6-3 win at No. 3 doubles, then Charlotte van Diemen and Sophie Wagemaker rallied from a 5-4 deficit to win 7-5 at No. 1 doubles over Cami Moreno and Yurie Takanishi.

South Alabama seemingly took control of the match early in singles, winning five of six first sets. Yu Fujioka avenged an earlier-season loss at No. 1 singles to the Eagles' Nadja Meier with a 6-4, 6-3 win to tie the match at 1-all. Moreno then downed Sophie Wagemaker, 6-1, 6-4, at

No. 3 singles to put the Jaguars in front. Otoho Aoki's 6-3, 6-3 win at No. 5 singles made the score 3-1, when the Eagles' Mila Hartig collected a 6-2, 7-5 win at No. 4 singles to close the gap to 3-2.

"I just kept on walking around and saying, 'be relentless,'" said McCaffrey. "Just because we're down now, it's a three-set match. So find a way to dig down deep."

After dropping their first sets, Paula Boixader and Elizabeth Goines each rallied to win their second sets at No. 2 and No. 6 singles, respectively, and send their singles matches to deciding third sets.

"With Paula, I knew we needed some sort of momentum shift," McCaffrey said. "I told her at 3-2 in the second set that any time you get a ball in the middle of the court, extend the court and go big off the forehand. And if you win two or three points in a row, go crazy, cheering. It really turned her game on and was a big difference maker."

Boixader finished off a 6-3 third-set win to tie the score at 3-all, then Goines won 6-2 in the third set over Diana Monsalve, closing out the match by winning 13 of her last 15 points in the set and sealing the championship win. Her teammates rushed onto the court after the final point.

"[Assistant coach Lena Lutzeier] and I told Liz at the beginning of the year that she was going to clinch the conference championship for us in Atlanta. And she did it," said McCaffrey.

Georgia Southern faced Georgia Tech in the first round of the NCAA Tournament on May 7 in Atlanta. The Yellow Jackets, ranked 13th in the country, defeated the Eagles 5-0.

The Eagles lose fifth-year senior Paula Boixader and senior Charlotte van Diemen from this season's squad and return nine players for 2021-22.

IN THE *SUN BELT*



Men's Golf Wins Second Sun Belt Championship

The Eagles topped Coastal Carolina 4-0-1 in the semifinals and defeated Little Rock 3-1-1 in the finals to win the Sun Belt Championship on April 28 at Mystic Creek Golf Club in El Dorado, Arkansas.

It was an especially satisfying win for fifth-year seniors Brett Barron and Jake Maples, who opted to return to Georgia Southern for their extra year of eligibility after the spring 2020 season was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maples never trailed and won both his matches, and Barron won one and tied one to lead the Eagles to their second Sun Belt title (2015) and their 10th conference championship overall. The win snapped a three-year streak of runner-up finishes for Georgia Southern in match play (2017, 2018, 2019).

"I could not be more proud of these guys and everything they accomplished this week on an extremely difficult golf course and in an extremely difficult format," said Head Coach Carter Collins. "I'm especially proud of Brett and Jake for coming back for their fifth year; they definitely deserve this. I'm proud of the whole team for putting forth a great effort this week and all year. I can't wait to see what's next. Go Eagles!"

After Ben Carr and Maples won their matches early against Little Rock, Mason Williams made a 25-footer for birdie on 15 to go 2-UP. On hole 17, he yanked his second shot into the woods and scrambled for bogey. Little Rock's Nico Horder was on the dance floor with a 20-footer for birdie, but he three-putted to halve the hole and give Williams the win.

All five guys in the lineup won a match today with Maples and Carr winning two and Williams, Barron and Luke Dasher each picking up a victory.

On Tuesday, Ben Carr shot an even-par 72, and Luke Dasher carded a 70, the lowest round of the day, to lead the Georgia Southern men's golf team to first place in the stroke play portion of the championship.

FINALS RESULTS - GS WINS 3-1-1

Match 1 - Brett Barron vs. Logan Pate - TIE

Match 2 - Mason Williams vs. Nicolas Horder - GS wins

Match 3 - Luke Dasher vs. Magnus Lomholt - LR wins

Match 4 - Jake Maples vs. Anton Albers - GS wins

Match 5 - Ben Carr vs. Marcel Rauch - GS wins

Carr (+3) birdied 12 and 13 and finished the day with five straight pars to take medalist honors by four strokes over Dasher (+7) and Seth Taylor and Zack Taylor of Coastal Carolina. It was Carr's second win this season and the sixth time the junior has finished in the top-5 in his career, which includes four this season.

It was the fourth time an Eagle has won medalist honors in the Sun Belt Championship since the school joined the league prior to the 2014-15 season, and the 10th time an Eagle has finished first at the conference championship.

The wins earned Georgia Southern an automatic bid to the NCAA Championships, a three-round event held May 17-19 at the Seminole Legacy Club in Tallahassee, Florida. In the last round, the Eagles ran their team score to 9-under through 11 holes, flirting with the cutline to move to the finals, but gave up strokes on the more difficult back 9 and ended the day even to finish eighth.

Carr shot 72 at the regional tournament to tie for 14th on the individual leaderboard, and Barron tied for 35th in his final collegiate tournament. Dasher posted a 72, Mason Williams carded a 73 and Maples shot a 74 to tie for 37th in his final collegiate event.

The Eagles return eight lettermen to the 2021-22 roster, including Carr, Dasher and Williams, who were in the lineup for the regional as well as the Sun Belt Championships.

TOP OF THE LEADERBOARD



Georgia Southern Golfer Leaves Behind Records, Trophies after Final Year with Team

Fifth-year senior Ella Ofstedahl ('20 '21) wasn't sure about Statesboro when she first enrolled at Georgia Southern University to play golf. However, after an illustrious career that includes a Sun Belt Conference Championship and the lowest round ever recorded by a female golfer at Georgia Southern, the Stevenage, England, native is proud to call Georgia Southern her home away from home.

"I felt lonely when I first came here with being so far away from home, but the golf team and Georgia Southern very quickly became my home away from home," Ofstedahl said. "The Georgia Southern community is so supportive. In terms of golf, it has just been a great opportunity to grow as a player and a person."

Ofstedahl, who shot a school record 66 during the 2019-20 season, is heading back to England now that her time at Georgia Southern is done. However, she's not finished with golf. Ofstedahl graduated with two Bachelor of Science degrees, one in sport management and one in psychology in 2020 and 2021, respectively. She hopes she can use her degrees to keep the sport she loves a part of her professional life.

"I am unsure of where my career will take me, but the thing I know for sure is that golf will always play an important role in whatever I do," she said. "I would love to work in the business operations side of tournaments or actually go into sport psychology. I know how mentally challenging this sport can be, so helping others any way I can sounds like something I would love."

Ofstedahl said her coaches at Georgia Southern helped her overcome the mental challenges she faced on the course. She consistently got better through her five years as an Eagle, winning a tournament in each of her last three seasons.

The moment that means the most to Ofstedahl, however, is her win at the 2018-19 Sun Belt Conference Championship, but not just because she finished first.

"This accomplishment means so much to me not only because it was my first collegiate win, but because it was the first event that my family had been able to fly out and watch," Ofstedahl said. "It was really special to have them by my side as I won, and it will be something I remember forever."

Ofstedahl is leaving behind a team full of her friends as she travels back to England. While she will only be able to cheer them on from the sidelines, Ofstedahl said she is confident that with all of their talent, the team will be successful in the years to come.

"This team is so special," she said. "The girls were a huge part of why I decided to come back for my fifth year, and I will always cherish the time that I have had with them. They are all so talented and I am genuinely excited to see them excel. I know they are all so capable of getting some team and individual wins. I know they will always motivate and encourage each other to work hard, so I don't think it's a question of if they'll be successful, it's when." — KYLE DAWSON

66 MINUTES AND A DREAM

Eagles basketball walk-on Eito Yuminami joins the pros in Japan

On paper, Eito Yuminami doesn't scream "pro basketball player."

He's 5'6" and 160 lbs. In his three-year career as a walk-on at Georgia Southern, he played 22 games — a total of 66 minutes — and scored 34 points. He'll freely admit to you that he can't jump or shoot as well as some of his former teammates.

But in his career with the Eagles, Yuminami became a fan favorite. His quickness and creativity made for electric performances on the court. More than that, however, he became an indispensable leader on the team.

"Eito is the ultimate team player," said Eagles head coach Brian Burg. "He's extremely unselfish. He's a great teammate, and that's probably one of his greatest attributes, his ability to connect with other players. He puts the program before himself. He has a bright future in basketball."

This month, Yuminami begins a new chapter in his basketball career — as a professional player and coach with the Nagasaki Velca in Japan. It's the realization of a goal he's pursued since he was five years old, and one that brought him halfway around the world to attain.

"When I was five years old, me and my dad planned our goals," said Yuminami, a native of Chiba, Japan. "We made this checklist. And we put that we would go to the United States, become a state champ, go to Division I and make it to the NBA."

Not every parent would take the dreams of their five year old as seriously as Shinichi and Wakako Yuminami did. Even fewer would move away from their family and friends in Japan to Mooresville, North Carolina, to make those dreams come true. Eito was only nine years old when his parents did just that.

"We were always looking for an opportunity," he said. "My dad got a job and we just came here."

Yuminami didn't speak any English when his family arrived in the U.S. He struggled in his first year at J.V. Washam Elementary School, often just sitting alone and crying. It wasn't until he played his first pick-up game of basketball that he felt like he could truly belong.

"Basketball's not just a sport to me," Yuminami said in a 2018 interview with the *Mooresville Citizen*. "Basketball's really helped me a lot."

In high school, Yuminami was a three-year starting point guard at Pine Lake Preparatory. By his senior year, he led a team that went 12-0 in league play and 19-8 overall. In 67 career games, he scored 679 points and a school-record 333 assists.

The point guard position also gave Yuminami a taste of his true passion — coaching. He had to set plays, shout cues to his teammates and take control of the game. At Georgia Southern, even when he was riding the bench, he was looking for ways to help.

"Eito is a student of the game," said Burg. "He's in the film room, and



he is constantly seeking out different types of instruction to learn the game from different perspectives. He has a bright future in coaching. He has a passion for the game, both on the court and off."

With the Velca, Yuminami will coach in the youth development league. He says he's excited about the competition he'll face during the year, but he's even more excited to help kids with dreams just like his.

"What I'm most excited about is how I'll get to share what I learned both in Japan and America with these kids, so they can use me as a resource and see if they want to go to the United States," he said. "I'm just excited. I get to share all this knowledge that I learned with all these little guys."

As for his parents, they'll stay here in the U.S., but will come visit him in Japan every chance they get. The distance is a small price to pay to watch their son follow his dream. He says their faith in him has been a driving force in his life.

"The only thing I want for them is to become happy for me," he said. "I just want them to say they're proud of me. When I got this pro contract, they were really excited. And, you know, that's what keeps me going to this day, to be honest." — DOY CAVE

WORLD CLASS SPEED



Georgia Southern QB Favian Upshaw Returns to Coach Eagles Running Backs

It's been six years since Favian Upshaw ('16) forever etched himself into Georgia Southern history.

He was a junior QB for the Eagles in 2015 when they faced Bowling Green in their first ever bowl game, the GoDaddy Bowl, in Mobile, Alabama. The first half was close, but in the second half, Upshaw went off. He scored four rushing touchdowns — none more memorable than his 80-yard, nail-in-the-coffin, ESPN-Top-10-Countdown sprint that began the 59-27 rout of the Falcons.

This season, Upshaw is looking to etch himself into Georgia Southern history yet again — this time as a coach — managing the “world class speed” of the current crop of Eagles running backs.

“Favian as a player showed great leadership and had the intangibles that were needed to play quarterback,” said Head Coach Chad Lunsford. “He has done an awesome job of taking those qualities and earning his way up the ranks of coaching to develop into a great young coach. I believe he will be a rock star in the coaching business.”

Upshaw returns to Georgia Southern after coaching stints at Benedict College and Savannah State — both teams that did not play during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to those positions, however, Upshaw served as a graduate assistant coach at Tulane under former Eagles head coach Willie Fritz and current offensive coordinator Doug Ruse. In this role, he served as the offensive assistant coach, concentrating on quarterbacks, and assisting the coaching staff with practice planning, film preparation and coordinating individual, position and staff meetings.

During his tenure, the Green Wave won their first back-to-back bowl wins in school history, including a convincing 41-24 win over Louisiana in the Cure Bowl. In 2019, Tulane was the ninth-best rushing team in the country and finished with a school-record 5,841 yards on offense. Upshaw says the experience prepared him for coaching at the collegiate level.

“I didn't understand how much really went into game planning and coaching and getting ready to prepare a team week in and week out,” he said. “But all the work that goes on behind the scenes, the late hours, the early hours of getting a game plan ready to get the guys prepared, it was eye-opening.”

The young coach is excited about the upcoming season for the Eagles, especially running the football. Seniors Logan Wright and J.D. King and senior Tulane transfer Amare Jones are primed to lead the unit, but a group of speedy underclassmen including Gerald Green and Jalen White return to the lineup as well.

At the time of this interview, Upshaw was just finishing spring practice and didn't know how the starting lineup would look just yet. However, he says Georgia Southern's ground game will be loaded with talent.

“I mean, with five guys that are that talented, you know, it's kind of the same situation that was with me and Kevin [Ellison],” he said. “How can you only use just one guy when they're all good enough to play, and they all bring something different?” — DOY CAVE

SIDELINES



SOFTBALL

EAGLES HAVE NEW HEAD COACH

Sharon Perkins has been named the head softball coach for the Eagles. Perkins, the seventh head softball coach in Georgia Southern history, replaces Kim Dean, who stepped down after completing four seasons. Perkins was most recently the head coach at Georgia Tech, where she recorded a 290-138 overall record in seven seasons with the Yellow Jackets, a .678 winning percentage. She turned the Georgia Tech program into a national power, one that set over a dozen school and ACC records. She coached 31 All-ACC selections, 17 all-region selections, five All-Americans, four ACC Players of the Year and two Olympians while leading that program. In her career as a player, assistant coach and as a head coach, Perkins has been a part of 13 NCAA Tournament appearances and 10 college conference titles.



WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

SUN BELT FRESHMAN OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION

Terren Ward was named the 2020-21 Sun Belt Conference Women's Basketball Freshman of the Year. Ward averaged 7.9 points per game and was the Eagles' leading scorer in Sun Belt Conference games at 9.2 points per game. The Jesup, Georgia, native earned Sun Belt Player of the Week honors on Feb. 8, becoming the first Georgia Southern freshman to earn a weekly league honor in program history. She becomes just the third Georgia Southern women's basketball player to earn league freshman of the year honors, joining 1990 TAAC Freshman of the Year Markisha Vereen and 2007 SoCon Freshman of the Year Carolyn Whitney. Ward is also the first player to earn a major award from Sun Belt Conference women's basketball since Georgia Southern joined the league in 2014-15.



BASEBALL

SENIOR SELECTED AS SUN BELT PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Mason McWhorter was named Sun Belt Player of the Year and First-Team All-Conference alongside teammate Nick Jones. Both players were also named All-Americans by *Collegiate Baseball*. McWhorter captured the first Player of the Year honor for the team since joining the Sun Belt Conference, posting a .372 average at the plate and driving in 52 runs. McWhorter broke the Georgia Southern school record for career doubles, surpassing Eric Phillips with 67 and crushed 17 home runs. Jones posted a 1.48 ERA, while leading the nation with 17 saves. Noah Ledford rounds out the three Eagles who were awarded honors by the Sun Belt Conference. Ledford was named to the Sun Belt Conference Second Team as a designated hitter, crushing 14 home runs and driving in 45 runs.



WOMEN'S GOLF

NEW COACH SELECTED

Georgia Southern Director of Athletics Jared Benko has announced the hiring of Mimi Burke to lead the Eagle women's golf program. Burke comes to Statesboro from the University of Georgia, where she spent the last four seasons. She began her collegiate coaching career at Purdue, where she served as an assistant coach for the women's program from 2015-17. A native of Mooresville, North Carolina, Burke was a four-year letterwinner at Appalachian State from 2009-13, where she posted the 10th-best stroke average in school history.



WOMEN'S RIFLE

TEAM WINS FIRST SOUTHERN CONFERENCE SMALLBORE TITLE

The Georgia Southern rifle team shot a school-record 2,278 to capture its first Southern Conference (SoCon) smallbore team title. It's the third team title in the program's short history - rifle's first year as a sponsored sport was in 2016-17 - as the Eagles won the 2017 and 2019 SoCon air rifle titles. Sophomore Ashley Judson was named air rifle co-athlete of the year for the second time in as many years while also earning first-team honors. Freshman Brianne Staton was named to the SoCon second team in both smallbore and air rifle for her year-long performance.



WOMEN'S TENNIS

SUN BELT COACH OF THE YEAR

Coach Sean McCaffrey was named the 2021 Sun Belt Conference Coach of the Year. He led Georgia Southern to a 19-8 overall record in 2021, setting a new school record for single season wins, while also going 7-3 in league play to earn the East Division No. 2 seed. The Eagles went on to win three matches at the Sun Belt Championship to capture the 2021 Sun Belt Conference title. The crown is the first conference tournament title for Georgia Southern tennis since 1996 and also earned the Eagles their first NCAA Championship berth for the first time in program history.



CLAY TARGET

TEAM WINS ACUI NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Georgia Southern University's clay target team won its first national championship during the 2021 Association of College Unions International (ACUI) Collegiate Clay Targets Championships in March. Nearly 50 college teams and more than 550 student-athletes made the trip to the National Shooting Complex in San Antonio, Texas, to compete across all divisions. The University team of 12 students won the Division 4 championship after shooting the highest score overall out of 14 teams competing. They also outperformed teams from around the nation to win the Super Sporting and Sporting Clays categories.



SPRING SNEAK PEEK



For the first time since 2019, Georgia Southern held spring practices, and on Friday, April 23, the Eagles gave fans a sneak peek at the team during the Blue and White Game. Almost 2,000 fans visited Paulson Stadium for the game, which had to be moved up to Friday at the last minute due to Saturday storms.

Redshirt junior Justin Tomlin led the offense for the White Team, throwing 7-of-16 for 62 yards and the lone touchdown of the contest, but cornerbacks Tyler Bride and Darrell Baker Jr. added four defensive points with one interception each.

On the blue team, redshirt sophomore Kicker Alex Raynor put all the Blue Team's points on the board with field goals from 23, 40 and 30 yards, respectively. He missed a game-winning 48-yard attempt that bounced off the crossbar.

The White Team won the game 11-9, but more importantly, Head Coach Chad Lunsford and Eagles fans got a good look at what the team is capable of — with Coach Scot Sloan's stout defense and Coach Doug Ruse's new offense.

The Eagles will open the 2021 season on Saturday, Sept. 4, at home against Gardner-Webb at 6 p.m.



2021 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SAT 9/4	6 P.M.	vs GARDNER-WEBB	STATESBORO, GA
SAT 9/11	3:30 P.M.	at FLORIDA ATLANTIC	BOCA RATON, FL
SAT 9/18	4 P.M.	at ARKANSAS	FAYETTEVILLE, AR
SAT 9/25	TBA	vs LOUISIANA	STATESBORO, GA
SAT 10/2	TBA	vs ARKANSAS STATE	STATESBORO, GA
SAT 10/9	TBA	at TROY	TROY, AL
THU 10/14	7:30 P.M.	at SOUTH ALABAMA	MOBILE, AL
SAT 10/30	TBA	vs GEORGIA STATE	STATESBORO, GA
SAT 11/6	TBA	vs COASTAL CAROLINA	STATESBORO, GA
SAT 11/13	TBA	at TEXAS STATE	SAN MARCOS, TX
SAT 11/20	TBA	vs BRIGHAM YOUNG	STATESBORO, GA
SAT 11/27	2:30 P.M.	at APP STATE	BOONE, NC





INTRODUCING THE LATEST ALUMNI AWARDS RECIPIENTS

*Honorees Recognized for
Service and Achievement*

The Georgia Southern University Alumni Association honored outstanding alumni for their achievements and service at this year's 2020-2021 Alumni Awards Gala. Held at the Botanic Garden, the 2020 top graduating senior was also recognized during the spring dinner and ceremony. In addition, the presentations included the 2021 Excellence in Business Awards for outstanding alumni-owned businesses.

"Georgia Southern has always believed in giving students hands-on, practical learning," said Trip Addison, vice president for University Advancement and president of the Georgia Southern University Foundation. "We've built a reputation for producing graduates who are ready to hit the ground running and ready to be leaders. The honorees are just a small sample of the entrepreneurial spirit and can-do attitude of Georgia Southern graduates, and we're thrilled to recognize these outstanding alumni-owned businesses."



2020 ALUMNI AWARDS

GEORGIA STATE REP. JON BURNS ('75)

TALON AWARD

The Talon award is bestowed upon a Georgia Southern graduate who best represents excellence in their career field, service to their alma mater and service to the community. House Majority Leader Jon Burns is the recipient of this award. Burns has created an incomparable legacy at Georgia Southern University, and has been a major force for change in Georgia. The native of Effingham County learned the value of hard work, faith and patience on his family farm — and has continued that family tradition with his sons, who run an agribusiness and farm with him today.

He graduated from Georgia Southern in 1975 with a political science degree. He later earned a Juris Doctor degree from John Marshall Law School and served in the Georgia Army National Guard. Even before he was elected to the state legislature in 2004, he demonstrated a commitment to his community. He served with the Effingham Chamber of Commerce, the Effingham County Young Farmers Organization, the Georgia Agribusiness Council and the Georgia Southern Alumni Association Board of Directors. He took this track record of service to the state Capitol, where he has left his most lasting legacy.

As an alumnus, as a representative and as House Majority Leader, Burns has been an unflinching supporter of Georgia Southern. He was instrumental in securing funding for the Eminent Scholars program, the Health Center, the Military Science Building, the Interdisciplinary Academic Building building, the Biological Sciences Building, the renovation of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health building and countless other projects that exceed \$100 million. Most recently,



he advocated for the new Jack and Ruth Ann Hill Convocation Center at Georgia Southern.

Burns and his wife, Dayle, a retired educator, have two sons, two daughters-in-law, and five grandchildren. The couple and their sons are all Georgia Southern alumni.



(THE LATE) WILLIAM "BILL" ROGERS CARY ('80)

MARVIN PITTMAN AWARD

The late William "Bill" Rogers Cary is the recipient of the Marvin Pittman award, named for a transformational Georgia Southern president who served in the 1930s and '40s. Pittman understood the power of education to create productive citizens, and the Pittman Award is presented to Georgia Southern alumni who best exemplify the core values of the University, which include a "commitment to lifelong learning, wellness and social responsibility."

Cary graduated in 1980 with a bachelor's in electrical engineering, and was a proud member of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. He served as an airman in the Air Force Civil Engineering Squadron and then began a long career as an electrical engineer, retiring from NEC America of Herndon, Virginia.

Cary was an outspoken activist on campus. He organized sit-ins, walkouts, protests and delivered fiery speeches, published underground newspapers and organized student work stoppages to change the racial culture at the University. His efforts led to greater inclusion of minorities in student affairs and student activities, allowed the first Black Greek organizations to form on campus and to be admitted to the National Pan-Hellenic Council and led to the development of a search committee to find and recruit minority faculty and staff.

In 2015, he returned to Georgia Southern to again advocate for minorities as a founding member of The First 500, an African American alumni group dedicated to helping minority students at the University. On Sept. 25, 2019, Cary passed away at the age 77. He is survived by his wife, Meshelle, and daughters McKenzie and Mari'Bess, who accepted this award.



RACHEL RHODES-DYAR ('76) AND KEN DYAR ('76) **THE SWEETHEART AWARD**

Georgia Southern has a long history of creating partnerships, not only within the community, but also among students and alumni. In many cases, these partnerships last a lifetime. The Sweetheart Award was created to honor alumni couples who have made that commitment to each other and continued their commitment to their alma mater.

The recipients of the Sweetheart Award are Ken Dyar and Rachel Rhodes-Dyar. Ken and Rachel are 1976 graduates of Georgia Southern — Ken with a bachelor's degree in political science and Rachel with a bachelor's degree in journalism. They met on the steps of the band building during the 1973 fall quarter. They say it wasn't love at first sight, but it didn't take long. They married in November 1976. Ken took a job with Georgia Power Company the same year and spent most of his career at Southern Nuclear, where he retired after almost 37 years of service. Rachel used her journalism degree at three different newspapers, moved into corporate public relations, and then served as executive director of the Toombs/Montgomery/Wheeler Counties United Way.

Ken and Rachel are true blue supporters of Georgia Southern. They've been Eagles football season ticket holders for more than 25 years, and are highly active in alumni and academic leadership. Ken is a former advisory council chair of the College of Arts and Humanities and remains active on the board today. Rachel is a current alumni association board member and chair of the Augusta alumni network. In 2006, the couple created the Laura Dyar Journalism Scholarship, named for Ken's great-grandmother. Their legacy to the University is a collection of letters from famed author Margaret Mitchell to Laura Dyar, parts of which will be featured in an upcoming Georgia Southern Museum exhibit.



(THE LATE) CRAIG HARNEY ('82)

GEORGE & LUCY ARMSTRONG AWARD

The George and Lucy Armstrong Award is named in honor of Lucy Camp Armstrong, who donated the Armstrong House to Savannah's new college, named after her late husband, in 1935. The award is presented to the Armstrong alumnus/alumna who best exemplifies the core values of Georgia Southern University. These values include integrity, civility, kindness and collaboration.

The Armstrong Award recipient is the late Craig Harney. A native of Savannah, he graduated from Armstrong in 1982. He began his career in the news industry 40 years ago, working part time for WTOG-TV while he was an undergraduate student. During his long career, Harney worked his way up to creative director for the station. He was known for his ability to tell stories from a unique angle, and most notably told the story of Savannah civil rights leader W.W. Law in the documentary "In His Own Words," for which Harney received the Scripps Howard National Journalism Award.

In addition to his career connection to Savannah, Harney was also connected to the community. He worked extensively with Junior Achievement and The United Way of the Coastal Empire, where he chaired the annual campaign marketing committee for several years. In 2008, the "Man of Steel" annual campaign received an Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

In 2019, he received the Spirit of Philanthropy Award from the United Way and was inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame as a 2019 Laureate. On November 30, 2019, Harney passed away at the age of 65. He is survived by his wife, Suzanne, and daughters Maggie and Annie. Accepting the award on behalf of the Harvey family is Karl and Mendy Grotheer.

ROGER H. SMITH ('90)

ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD

The Alumni Service Award was created to honor alumni who have made the greatest contribution to the University, whether through philanthropy, volunteerism or both. Roger H. Smith, the recipient of the Alumni Service Award, was born and raised in Savannah. He is a 1990 alumnus of Armstrong State College, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in English with minors in French and education.

For eight years, Smith served as a teacher at Savannah Christian Preparatory School, teaching American literature and French language and culture. In 1999, he was named museum educator at the Massie Heritage Center, and in 2001, he served as the director of education at the Georgia Historical Society. In 2006, he joined the staff of Senior Citizens, Inc. as director of The Learning Center — a lifelong learning program for adults ages 55 and up.

He is also active in the community — and with his alma mater. He was named a notable

Armstrong alumnus in 2013, and served on the Armstrong Alumni Association board of directors from 2014-2018. Smith is also a past president of the consolidated Georgia Southern University Alumni Association board of directors. He volunteers at the historic Davenport House, where he has also served on the museum committee and as its chair. He has served on the Historic Savannah Foundation board of directors, the Friends of Massie Committee, and presently serves on the Savannah Council on World Affairs board of directors, where he was also a past president.

ANDREA LANIER PAPAGEORGE ('80)

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

With so many incredibly successful alumni, the Professional Achievement Award is perhaps the most competitive of all of the Alumni Awards. To rise to the top of the list requires extensive influence and an established history of impact and achievement.

Andrea Lanier Papageorge is the latest recipient of the Professional Achievement Award. Originally from Savannah, Papageorge is a 1980 alumna of Georgia Southern, where she earned a degree in political science. She went on to earn her law degree from the University of Georgia and later earned an MBA from Brenau University.

She began her career in 1987 as a staff attorney for Athens-Clarke County Georgia, where her responsibilities included most areas of local government, including building inspections. In 1994, she joined the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as manager of Construction Codes and Industrialized Buildings and in 2000 served in the government relations department at the International Code Council. In 2005, Papageorge began her 15-plus year career at Southern Company Gas, starting as a specialist in codes and standards, and working her way up to manager of Building and Gas Codes and Standards, where she currently serves.

Papageorge is active in professional organizations — too many to list entirely. She has been a featured speaker at several conferences and training meetings, and she has served on multiple national technical committees including the National Fuel Gas Code, the International Code Council, International Fuel Gas Code and the Canadian Standards Association. She has also served in leadership roles in many organizations and has won several professional awards for her work.

REV. JAMES “MAJOR” WOODALL ('16)

COMMUNITY HERO AWARD

The Community Hero Award was created to pay tribute to alumni who have gone above and beyond to improve their community at the local, regional, national or even international level. The Reverend James “Major” Woodall is the recipient of the Community Hero Award.

Woodall is a native of Riverdale, Georgia, and a 2016 alumnus of Georgia Southern, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in political science with a minor in religious studies. He's a member of the 40 Under 40 Class of 2020 and is an eight-year veteran of the U.S. Army Reserve. He has served on the State Committee of the Democratic Party of Georgia and as state vice president of the Georgia Clients Council. He was a deputy campaign manager for Francys Johnson, and legislative aide to State Rep. Miriam Paris. A Gold-Life member of the NAACP, he has served as its state president of the Georgia Youth and College Division, vice president of its Bulloch County Branch and state chairman of the Young Adults Committee. He was a 2018 inaugural graduate of its Next Gen Program, and currently serves as the president of the Georgia NAACP — the youngest state president in the organization's history.

Woodall is also a minister, currently enrolled at the Interdenominational Theological Center pursuing a Master of Divinity through the Morehouse School of Religion. He is an associate minister at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Marietta, Georgia.



MARGARET KILPATRICK ('19)

OUTSTANDING SENIOR AWARD

The Outstanding Senior Award has been a longstanding tradition at Georgia Southern. This award is selected based entirely on numbers. It is given to the graduating senior who has earned the highest GPA while completing all academic hours at the University.

Not surprisingly, the person who achieved this standing is extraordinary. Margaret Kilpatrick was an Honor's Scholar and graduated with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a minor in Spanish. She was president of the National Mechanical Engineering Honors Society, Pi Tau Sigma, for the 2018-2019 academic year, worked as the student writing fellow for the engineering department from 2017-2019, and worked for two-and-a-half years in the Automotive and Aerospace Combustion Laboratories from fall 2017 to fall 2019, completing undergraduate research in jet turbine engine vibrations and emissions with standard and alternative fuels.

After graduation, she completed an internship with NASA at Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, working with the Structural Dynamics and Integration Branch on new vibration mitigation techniques for in-space applications. Kilpatrick worked with Lockheed Martin last summer before beginning her graduate studies at Georgia Tech in Aerospace Engineering. She plans to work in the aerospace industry with jet/rocket engines to continue to push the bounds of human understanding and capabilities for in-space exploration.

2021 EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS AWARDS

**MIKE CUMMINGS AND BILL HOYT
SIR SHOP IN DUBLIN, GEORGIA**

DUBLIN SIR SHOP is a men's clothing retailer owned by Mike Cummings, a 1974 graduate of the Parker College of Business, and Bill Hoyt, a 1973 and 1975 graduate of the Parker College of Business. Their stake in the Sir Shop started when they were students at Georgia Southern, working at the Sir Shop in Statesboro. When they graduated, they partnered and opened the Dublin location in April of 1975. Now a staple of Dublin commerce for 46 years, the Sir Shop has received the Dublin Chamber of Commerce Award, the Master Retailer Award by Tuxedo Central 2015-2019, the Retailer of the Year Award by Bowdon Manufacturing, and was named the Georgia Menswear Retailer of the Year.

**MARGOT MORRIS DAWKINS
ATLANTA ADVERTISING
NOVELTY**

ATLANTA ADVERTISING NOVELTY COMPANY is a marketing and advertising firm owned by alumna Margot Morris Dawkins, a 1976 graduate of the business program. A fixture of the Atlanta area since 1918, the company is the oldest promotional products distributor in continuous business in the Southeast. They have won several Pyramid Awards, the highest in their field, and have been longtime supporters of Georgia Southern, supporting alumni, the foundation, College of Business events, and have provided office space to University staffers in the area. Dawkins says the company is proud to be part of the Georgia Southern Network.

**ALEKS DAVIS
LORI DAVIS
B2S LIFE SCIENCES IN
BARGERSVILLE, INDIANA**

B2S LIFE SCIENCES is a biotechnology company that supports pharmaceutical drug development. Founded by alumnus Aleks Davis, who graduated with chemistry, science and mathematics degrees in 2000, and alumna Lori Davis, who graduated in 2001 with an early childhood education degree, B2S uses protein chemistry, biochemistry and molecular biology to create services and products that help develop safer drugs more efficiently. The company currently employs 45 scientists and staffers in three different states — 65% of whom are women, which is incredibly rare for a pharmaceutical and biotechnology company. B2S connects with several charitable organizations and educational institutions, and has sponsored 10 internships. In 2019, they were named the Small Business Administration exporter of the year.





**MARSHALL SMITH
ALEXANDER SMITH
PRIDE POOLS IN CLAXTON, GEORGIA**

PRIDE POOLS, SPAS AND LEISURE is an award-winning, family-owned and operated business making backyard dreams come true. Founded in 1975 in Claxton, Georgia, the business is currently co-owned by Alexander Smith, who graduated from Georgia Southern in 1990 with a bachelor's in recreation and tourism management degree, his brother Marshall Smith, and sister Sherrie Buckman. Pride Pools is highly active in the regional community. Alexander serves on the board of the Statesboro Boys and Girls Club, and Pride Pools sponsors the Haunted Forest event — their biggest fundraiser. The company has contributed to Evans County Hospital, Claxton Fire Department, WSAV-TV Holiday Hope, Savannah ALEE Shriners and more — and is a member of Chambers of Commerce throughout the Coastal Empire, Buy Local Savannah, Statesboro and Savannah Rotary and more. Pride Pools also supports Georgia Southern by purchasing Skybox Season tickets for Eagles basketball, baseball and football every year, and in 2014, they installed the therapy pools in the football operations center.

**CHRISTOPHER JANN
MEDICUS IN
CUMMING, GEORGIA**

MEDICUS I.T. is a computer and network security firm, founded and owned by Christopher Jann, who graduated from Georgia Southern in 2001 with a BBA in information systems. The company provides managed services and cybersecurity specifically for health care and has offices in five states. Medicus I.T. is founded on core values that Jann said he learned at Georgia Southern — the first being Erk Russell's maxim, "Do Right." Medicus is active in their communities, supporting several charities. The company is also a supporter of the University, working closely with the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing for recruiting, internship programs and career fair events. In 16 years of business, Medicus has won numerous awards including Best and Brightest Companies to Work For in the Nation, the Inc. 5000 Growth Recipient award, and the Datto Backup Innovator of the Year.



**ROBIN RICH
AUTOMATION SYSTEMS IN
STATESBORO, GEORGIA**

AUTOMATION SYSTEMS & CONTROLS, INC. (ASCI) is a multi-national control systems integrator and industrial equipment fabricator. Founded in 1998 by Robin Rich, a Double Eagle alumnus with degrees in business and engineering, the company employs a dedicated staff of 45 engineers, programmers, electricians, millwrights and fabricators. Rich says the company is the best at what it does, and received the 2013 Owens Corning Value Engineering Award — one of only 14 awarded nationwide. Rich and ASCI support Georgia Southern through scholarships to the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing, giving to the Erk Russell Fund, and currently employ five Eagle engineers, one marketing major and one education major. Rich also received the 2015 alumnus of the year award from the College of Engineering.



GEORGIA SOUTHERN HOSTS GRATITUDE GALA

Exemplary Donors Recognized at Annual Gathering

Philanthropy is at the heart of service for many Georgia Southern alumni and supporters who continue to find ways to make a lasting impact on the University. This past spring, Georgia Southern hosted the annual Gratitude Gala to recognize three key donors for their longtime support of institutional initiatives. The event was held on May 1 at the Mansion on Forsyth Park in Savannah.

"The Gratitude Gala gives Georgia Southern an opportunity to celebrate our donors who have gone above and beyond in their support for the University," stated Vice President for University Advancement Trip Addison. "Even with COVID-19 restrictions in place, we were honored to gather a small group for the event this year to recognize alumni and friends of the University who are helping us be more effective in our mission of transforming lives through education. It is important that we come together to say thank you for being a key part of our past, present and future."

The honorees who were presented with awards included one individual, one family and one corporation. They are listed below.

2021 LEGACY AWARD: ROSE MAE BOGAN MILLIKAN

Rose Millikan ('59) received the Legacy Award for her many years of giving and for her deferred charitable commitment to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The Assistant Professor Emerita of Mathematical Sciences has been a loyal supporter of Georgia Southern University since her first gift to the University in 1984. In addition to teaching math from 1984-1999 at Georgia Southern, she also encouraged many young students to pursue careers in math and science. After retiring from a career that she truly loved, Millikan found a renewed purpose: endowing scholarships that support her passion for education.

Throughout the years, she has endowed two scholarships in the areas of math and science, and most recently endowed a scholarship in anthropology in honor of her son, alumnus and internationally recognized paleoanthropologist Lee R. Berger, Ph.D., D.Sc. ('89). In 2015, Rose Mae proposed to the University the funding for an archaeological repository. The 6,000 square-foot RM Bogan Repository opened in May 2017. Millikan's support of the University also includes donating the first sculptured eagle for the Eagle Nation on Parade public arts project supporting student scholarships and undergraduate research initiatives as well as donating artwork exhibited at the College of Arts and Humanities.



2021 PRESIDENT'S INNOVATOR AWARD: THE EVANS FAMILY

Evans General Contractors was founded in 2001 by Tim Evans. The company has grown into a leading design/build, general contracting and construction management firm under the Evans family leadership that now includes RT Evans and Sarah Evans Rothwein. The Evans family works together to make a difference both in their industry and through their philanthropy.

Tim Evans is a former Trustee of the Georgia Southern University Foundation Board and RT is a current Board Trustee. The Evans family has made serving Georgia Southern a passion. They have endowed a scholarship for the Southern LEAD program, supported the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing and were instrumental in the building of the Ted Smith Football Operations Center.

Most recently, the Evans family stepped up again as the lead donor in the University's Finish Strong campaign with \$135,000 to help bridge the gap financially for students trying to finish college during the pandemic. Scholarships through this campaign help to ensure that Georgia Southern students can stay enrolled and complete their degrees. The Evans family received the President's Innovator Award for their unwavering support of both the University and its students.



2021 PRESIDENT'S VISIONARY AWARD: ROTARY CORPORATION

The Rotary Corporation and Georgia Southern Athletics both began with humble beginnings. But guided by determination and hard work they have experienced great success. Today, Rotary Corporation is an internationally recognized leader in the outdoor power equipment industry. Bill Nelson, who shepherded much of the company's growth, was a longtime supporter of education and built a strong relationship with Georgia Southern University. Ed Nelson, who took the helm after his father, has worked alongside his two sisters, Tara Martin ('85) and Traci Heilman ('87) to build Rotary into a global supplier of outdoor power equipment parts, tools and accessories.

The Nelson family's commitment and philanthropic contributions to Georgia Southern continue to this day. Rotary Corporation supports both academics and athletics at the University. It has been instrumental in the formation of Paulson Stadium's Field of Dreams, J.I. Clements' Blue Monster, the Bill W. Nelson Hall of Fame and the most recent Hanner Fieldhouse renovations. In presenting the 2021 President's Visionary Award, Georgia Southern honors and celebrates Rotary and the Nelson family for their generosity and enhancements to Georgia Southern Athletics.





A PART OF WHO I AM

Journalist Nadia Dreid Grows Up with Georgia Southern

"I love being a journalist," said Nadia Dreid ('15), who earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Georgia Southern. "My professors at Georgia Southern taught me to truly respect the journalism profession and I fell in love with it."

Dreid was born in Statesboro and grew up surrounded by all things Georgia Southern. There was never a doubt that she would become an Eagle.

"I was homeschooled, so I kind of grew up with the University," said Dreid. "It felt like home. I felt good about going to school in such a welcoming environment."

PROFESSORS HELD THE KEY

Dreid has been a reporter based in Washington, D.C., for the past four-and-a-half years for *Law360*, a legal news publication. Journalism is a notoriously difficult field to get into, but Dreid's perseverance and the expertise she gained from her work at *The George-Anne* student newspaper plus her internships, prepared her for success as a reporter. Still, she acknowledged it wouldn't have happened without her professors at Georgia Southern.

"Dr. Jennifer Kowalewski was just amazing," said Dreid. "And David Simpson, probably more than any other professor, helped shape my career. He's the one who pushed me in student media. He pushed me to apply for the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire internship in Washington, D.C., and I'm really grateful he did."

INTERFAITH OUTREACH

Dreid is a practicing Muslim who wears a headscarf, also known as a hijab — a rare sight on Georgia Southern's campus in 2010.

"My mother's family are Southern Baptist and my dad is Muslim," said Dreid. "Oh, what a combination! They divorced when I was young, so I was kind of raised in the middle, but with very little religious upbringing."

As Dreid got older, she became interested in religion, especially the Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Islam and Christianity. After studying those three religions, she decided that Islam was right for her and started practicing the Muslim faith. She also minored in religion while at Georgia Southern.

During Dreid's early years on campus, she helped found a Muslim student association. She was one of only two hijab-wearing women

on campus and she said some people really didn't understand why she wore the head covering. So, she undertook many outreach and interfaith events with the Hillel Jewish student organization.

"It was definitely a really big part of my experience at Georgia Southern that I cherish," said the Statesboro native. "Speaking at interfaith events gave me a background in talking to people, which I definitely needed as a journalist."

Dreid doesn't think her faith stands in the way of her work as a reporter.

"Sometimes, if you are a different race or religion, visibly different, people think that you can't write about certain issues because you won't remain unbiased," said Dreid. "But I think the industry has started to open up about that a lot more."

ON TOP OF THE WHALE

Dreid met the man who would become her husband, Jonathan Capriel, during her Scripps Howard internship. Capriel is also a reporter with the *Washington Business Journal*, and a practicing Muslim.

Capriel and Dreid got married in 2018 at Georgia Southern's Botanic Garden. But the story of their engagement is what's most often discussed. Decades ago, Georgia Southern Professor Richard Petkewich, Ph.D., a paleontologist, is reported to have buried a pygmy sperm whale beneath Sweetheart Circle. But nobody is really certain where it is.

"Jonathan came to visit me and we were walking on Sweetheart Circle," said Dreid. "I said 'the whale's right here', just making something up, and I jumped on the spot. Then suddenly Jonathan proposed. He always tells people he proposed on top of the whale in Sweetheart Circle."

AWARD-WINNING WRITER

Dreid's career at *Law360* has been blossoming. She has written many stories, but said there is one story in particular that gives her great pride.

"I talked to 15 or so Black attorneys about their experiences in the wake of the George Floyd incident", she said. "I did hours of interviews with them about what they were going through. It was very difficult putting the story together. I was really proud of that and proud of how *Law360* supported me."

In 2020, out of thousands of stories, Dreid received the "Best Feature of the Year" award from *Law360*. Quite an honor for the young journalist who got her start in reporting at Georgia Southern.

"Georgia Southern is a part of who I am," said Dreid. "It's a part of who I was from the time I was two or three years old. And when *Law360* told me that I could work remotely due to the pandemic, the idea of being able to once again spend time on campus made me very happy." — LIZ WALKER



CHRONICLES

Gayle U. Wooten ('68), has retired after more than 51 years as an educator and education advocate. For the past 21 years, she served as the human resources director and in other administrative roles with the Professional Association of Georgia Educators in Atlanta.

Cheryl Y. Bland ('77) has been elected to a second term on the Morgan County Charter School Board of Education in Morgan County, Georgia.

Justice Michael Boggs ('85)

was unanimously elected by justices on the Supreme Court of Georgia as the court's next Presiding Justice. He succeeds Presiding Justice David Nahmias who was also elected by his colleagues to become the next Chief Justice of the court. As Presiding Justice, Boggs will serve in the Chief Justice's



absence and as the vice chair of the Judicial Council. Boggs has served on the Georgia Supreme Court since his appointment by former Gov. Nathan Deal in 2016. He won statewide election to a six-year term in 2018. Boggs had previously served as a state Court of Appeals judge and Superior Court judge for the Waycross Judicial Circuit.

Mike Davis ('88) is retiring as the head of the U.S. Golf association (USGA). The Georgia Southern golfer spent his entire career with golf's governing body in the U.S. In recognition of his service to the organization, the USGA is renaming the organization's Turfgrass Environmental Research Program, the Mike Davis Program for Advancing Golf Course Management. It is the golf industry's largest private grant program dedicated to sustainability and improved on-course experience. Last fall, the CEO announced he would leave the USGA to pursue his longtime passion for golf course design and construction.

John Shuman ('95) president and CEO of Shuman Farms, was named the 2020 Grower of the Year by the Vidalia Onion Committee. He has contributed to the industry for more than 25 years.

Carla Jennings MacDonald ('98,'02,'12) was accepted into the Baylor University Doctorate of Education program in Learning and Organizational Change.

Teresa MacCartney ('99, '01) has been tapped as the acting chancellor of the University System of Georgia (USG) by the USG Board of Regents. Before joining USG, MacCartney served as Georgia's chief financial officer as well as director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. Prior to the interim appointment, MacCartney served as USG's executive vice chancellor for administration.



UPCOMING ALUMNI & FRIENDS EVENTS

Save the Dates!

True Blue Tailgate at FAU -
September 11

40 Under 40 Dinner and Awards -
September 24

Homecoming - October 30

1906 Society Event - November 19

True Blue Tailgate at App State -
November 27

Every Eagle. Every Year.

GeorgiaSouthern.edu/give



Georgia Southern University
ALUMNI

STAY CONNECTED with the Eagle Nation
UPDATE your contact information
GeorgiaSouthern.edu/alumni

FOLLOW us

@GeorgiaSouthernUniversityAlumni
 @GASouthernAlums
 @gsalumni
 Georgia Southern University Alumni Network

CHRONICLES

Cicely Thomas ('99) has been appointed to the Georgia Board of Examiners of Licensed Dietitians. She is the nutrition service director for the Northwest Georgia Division of Public Health. Thomas has worked as a public health administrator and educator for 20 years, specializing in community nutrition, education, and outreach.

Justin Wright ('02,'03) has been named executive vice president and chief financial officer of Great Southern Wood Holdings.

Jeremy Olson ('03) has joined the University of North Georgia faculty as an assistant professor of chemistry.

Matt Lee ('04) has been recognized as Volunteer of the Year by the Associated General Contractors of Georgia, the leading association of the construction industry. Lee is vice president of Young Contracting/SE in Atlanta.

Cameron Harmon, Ph.D., ('07) has been selected as the dean of math and sciences at Fayetteville Technical Community College.

Cherie Dennis ('10) is a Top Ten Finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year. She teaches English to Speakers of Other Languages at a K-8 school in Savannah. Dennis is also the 2021-2022 District Teacher of the Year for the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System.

Kenya Harrison ('10) retired from the U.S. Marine Corps in August 2020 after 23 years of service.

Kayley Ralton ('10) has been promoted to head women's soccer coach at the University of North Georgia. She was a four-year standout at Armstrong State from 2006-09.

Zerik Samples ('11,'13), a member of the Alumni Board, is CEO of the Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Georgia in Savannah.

Nicole Pope ('12) has been honored as a 2021 Georgia Rising Star by *Super Lawyers*

Magazine. She practices in the areas of technology law and intellectual property law with HunterMaclean in Savannah.

Michael Choromanski ('14) has joined Savannah Chatham County Public Schools as a middle school 7th grade life sciences teacher.

Hannah Clements ('15) has a new job as a board-certified behavior analyst for Refocus Behavior in Hinesville, Georgia.

Connor Bizon ('16) has a new job as a senior chemist for Thermacell Repellents, Buford, Georgia.

Andrew E. Jones ('17) has a new job as a speech language pathologist, Calhoun, Georgia.

Sarah M. Strickland ('20) has a new job as a laboratory manager at the University of Georgia.

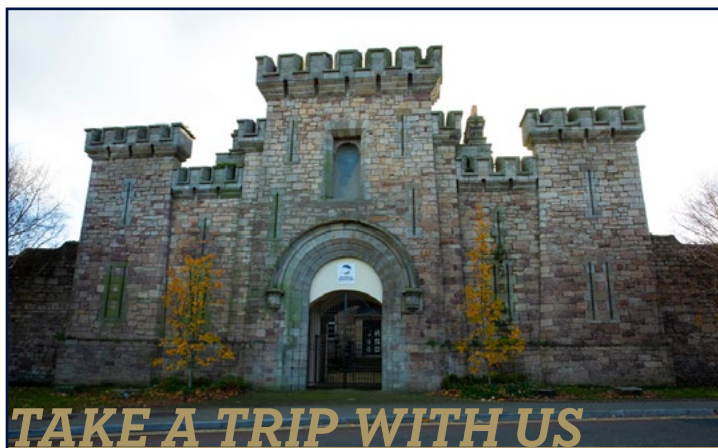
John S. Gadalla ('20) joined Mustard Seed Dental Studio in Augusta, Georgia, as a dental laboratory technician.

SUPPORT
GEORGIA SOUTHERN
**ALUMNI
OWNED**



BUSINESSES
or list your alumni owned business!

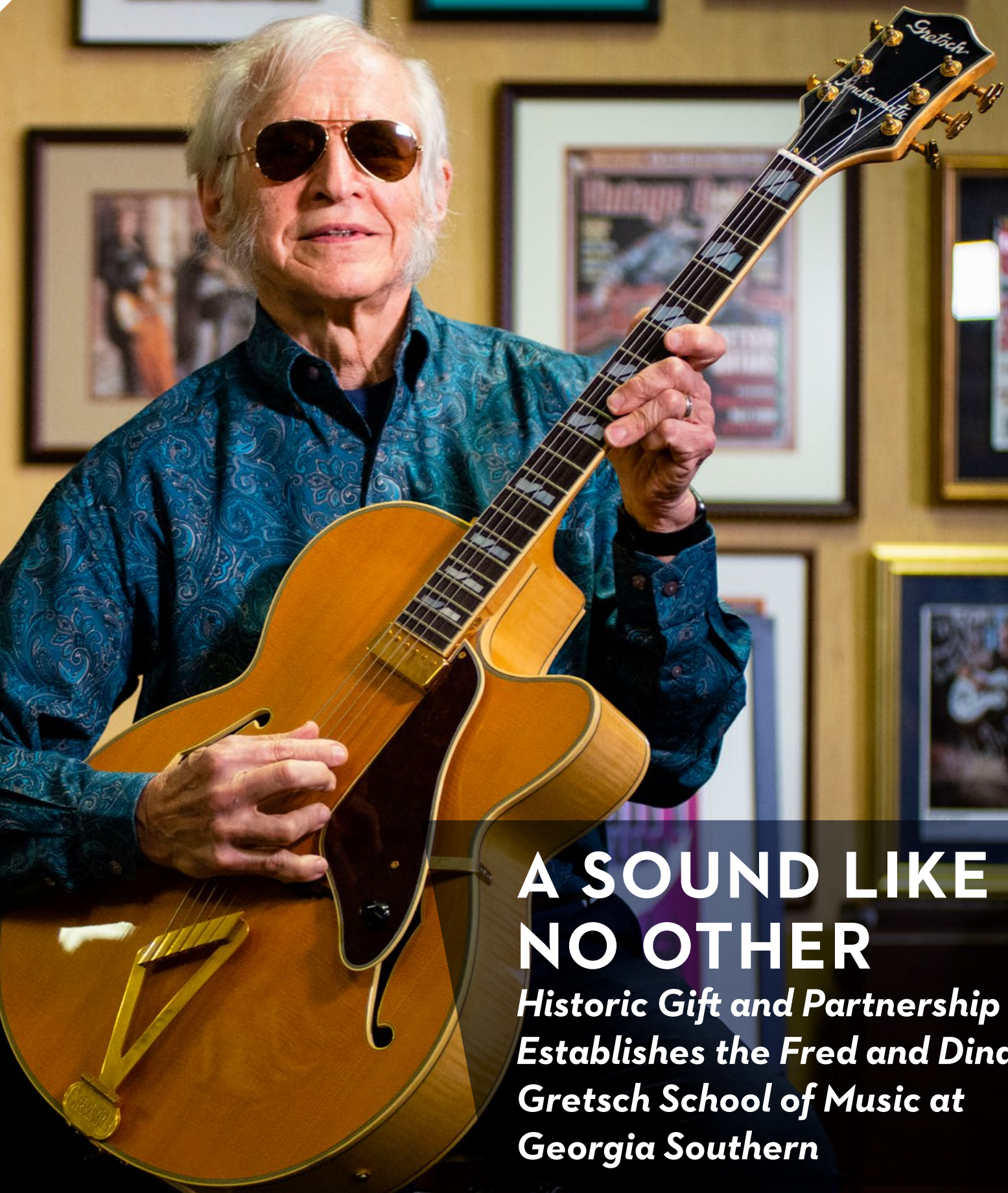
GeorgiaSouthern.edu/AlumniOwned



TAKE A TRIP WITH US

Join us next summer as we explore Ireland's connections to Georgia Southern, Savannah and the great state of Georgia!

June 4-12, 2022
GeorgiaSouthern.edu/AlumniIreland



A SOUND LIKE NO OTHER

*Historic Gift and Partnership
Establishes the Fred and Dinah
Gretsch School of Music at
Georgia Southern*



If you've listened to music in the last 138 years, there's a good chance you've heard "that great Gretsch sound."

Drummer Jimmy Cobb played a Gretsch kit on Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue" — a jazz classic. Chet Atkins recorded his influential country album, "Mister Guitar," on a Country Gentleman guitar — his signature model. Atkins fan George Harrison played the same model on several Beatles albums, and Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts carried the backbeat on every record playing Gretsch kits.

And now, the Gretsch name, international reputation, and more than a century of history are joined with Georgia Southern in the Fred and Dinah Gretsch School of Music.

In February, the Gretsch family made a significant donation to the University, along with the Gretsch Collection of historic drums, guitars and company archives, a collection worth millions that tells the story of music in America.

"The generosity and vision of this transformational gift from Fred and Dinah Gretsch is truly a milestone in Georgia Southern's history — for the University, for the communities we serve and for our school of music," said Georgia Southern University President Kyle Marrero. "This collaboration with the Gretsch family, the Gretsch Company and its commitment to excellence exemplifies our goal to elevate and further enhance extraordinary programs, like our music program at Georgia Southern."

For the Gretsch family, the gift is part of a more personal mission.

"We have a family goal to enrich lives through participation in making music," said Fred Gretsch, who runs the company with his wife, Dinah. "So our goal would be more people in this part of the world will get a chance to participate in making music — that Georgia Southern will spearhead a community of music-loving people of all ages to experience music, to improve their talent in music making and, like Mrs. Gretsch and I have, make a career out of the music industry."

THE "E" GENE

Gretsch is the great-grandson of Friedrich Gretsch, a German immigrant and entrepreneur who founded the company in 1883. It started as a music store in Brooklyn, New York, where he built handmade banjos, drums and tambourines in a small workshop. By 1920, Gretsch was recognized as the largest manufacturer of musical instruments in the United States.

Today, the family-owned company is based in Pooler, Georgia, and still recognized as one of the music industry's most influential and innovative instrument manufacturers, with some of the most respected names in music as its devotees.

When you ask Fred Gretsch about his own musical ability, however, he'll tell you he didn't get "the A gene" — the artistic gene — from his great-grandmother, who was a pianist. He did, however, get "the E gene" — the entrepreneurial gene — from his great-grandfather and his grandfather and his father who led the company through its history.

The company remained in the family until 1967, when Gretsch's uncle, Fred Gretsch Jr., retired and negotiated a sale of the company to Baldwin Piano Company. "It was my goal to buy the business back again," said Gretsch. "It took 17 years to do it. In 1984, Mrs. Gretsch and I bought the business back again."

The Gretsch Company was the first to create a "warp-free," multi-ply drum hoop — a process pioneered by Fred Gretsch Sr., who took over the company in 1895, when he was only 15 years old. They've created specialty guitars for the likes of blues legend Bo Diddley and Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, rock icons like Stephen Stills of Crosby, Stills and Nash, and Malcolm Young of AC/DC.

FRED AND DINAH GRETSCH SCHOOL OF MUSIC

In their Pooler, Georgia, headquarters, the studio walls are lined with photos of stars in the Gretsch roster. In a recent tour of the studio, a visitor noticed a small, framed photo on a shelf, among old books, magazines and instruments. In the photo was Johnny Ramone of the Ramones, Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam and Billy Zoom,

guitarist for the punk rock band X.

"Do you know those guys?" he asked.

Gretsch saw the photo and said, "Oh, yeah. You know, Billy has always played Gretsch guitars. He and his wife came down for Dinah's 40th Anniversary that we celebrated in West Lake Village, California, in 2019. Really nice guy."

A REALLY BIG DEAL

Steven Harper, chair of Georgia Southern's music department, said he can't overstate the importance of this partnership with Gretsch.

"I mean, it's always a big deal to have a school of music named," he said. "Obviously, it involves a lot of money and a lot of commitment, and the Gretsches have been big advocates for universal music education for decades. Fred and Dinah Gretsch — these are international figures. The Gretsch name is known all over the world. It's a really big deal for us."

As part of the agreement, Georgia Southern is establishing the Fred and Dinah Gretsch School of Music Performance Stage at the Atlantic Building of the new downtown Plant Riverside District in Savannah. The building will feature exhibit space that will highlight Gretsch instruments. Similar exhibits will be planned at the Georgia Southern Museum in Statesboro, as well as the Fine Arts Hall at the Armstrong Campus, and can be packaged for partner shows around the world.

The agreement will also create several new positions at the University. The Distinguished Scholar in Guitar/Music Industry will be an assistant professor in the new music industry program who will also work with the museum and library to document, curate and promote the Gretsch Collection. The Gretsch Collection Curator of Permanent Collections will manage the collection in all aspects of cataloguing, registration, maintenance and upkeep, and will hire a project archivist and two graduate assistantships to help with the process.

What does all this mean for the school of music at Georgia Southern? Harper anticipates the school will be double, even triple its current size 10 years from now.

"On the Armstrong Campus, a lot of that is going to be driven by the music industry program," he said. "In Statesboro, that's going to be driven by the more traditional things. We've always been a really important music education school. Our graduates are highly sought after in the state. Now, there's an opportunity to vastly increase what we're able to do."

For Gretsch, the partnership is all about continuing the story of music. Many critics have decried the end of the music industry as digital distribution and the decentralization of music production puts music in the hands of music professionals, novices and hobbyists alike.

The way Gretsch sees it, though, there will always be a market for music — not because of distribution, but for how it makes us feel.

"It's a new world and a new wave," said Gretsch. "But the interesting thing through it all — the value of music, how we feel about it, is still the same. And the traditional music of the masters is still highly valued."

"So, how long will the drum business and the guitar business be around? Well, it will be around as long as the music is popular. And I daresay the music will be popular a hundred years from now, no different than Mozart and Beethoven."

"They'll be around, too...just different people listening to it."

— DOY CAVE

SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

Georgia Southern Foundation Exceeds \$110 Million in Assets

For the first time in its 59-year history, the Georgia Southern University Foundation, Inc. reported more than \$110 million in assets — funds that support the University and its students.

The number is double the amount of assets from only eight years ago. In 2013, the Foundation reported \$50,668,922. Michael R. Sanders, chairman of the Georgia Southern University Foundation, says the new record is an amazing achievement accomplished by a dedicated team.

“Having the Foundation’s total assets cross the \$110M mark is an accomplishment our entire University can look on with pride,” he said. “The leadership of the Foundation Board and University Advancement, and the hard work of the Development Team deserve so much of the credit. Our Board wholeheartedly supports and assists with these fundraising

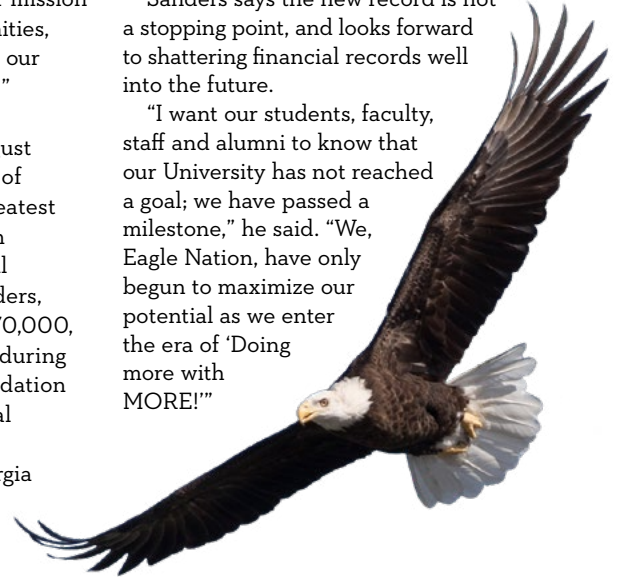
initiatives, knowing they reinforce our mission to provide scholarships and opportunities, such as the Eagle Payment Option, to our most valuable resource...our students.”

The Georgia Southern University Foundation, Inc. was founded in August 1962 as a way to support the growth of the University with the help of its greatest supporters — Statesboro and Bulloch County. With the full support of local business people and community leaders, the Foundation raised more than \$170,000, a significant sum in ‘60s-era dollars, during its formative years. In 1971, the Foundation raised more than \$100,000 in annual donations for the first time.

By 1995, just a few years after Georgia Southern became a university, the Foundation reported \$9,165,103 in assets.

Sanders says the new record is not a stopping point, and looks forward to shattering financial records well into the future.

“I want our students, faculty, staff and alumni to know that our University has not reached a goal; we have passed a milestone,” he said. “We, Eagle Nation, have only begun to maximize our potential as we enter the era of ‘Doing more with MORE!’”



FOR THE

2021 FACULTY/STAFF



OF BLUE

GIVING CAMPAIGN

FEBRUARY 1 - 14

RAISED \$147,000

39% PARTICIPATION RATE (UP 2% FROM LAST YEAR)

1,146 FACULTY/STAFF DONORS

GEORGIA SOUTHERN RECEIVES SECOND LARGEST ESTATE GIFT IN THE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION'S HISTORY

An extraordinary estate gift from a daughter and her husband to honor her parents will touch the lives of generations of students to come through scholarships



The Georgia Southern University Foundation has received the second largest estate gift in its history through the generosity of the late Janice Sapp Castles and her late husband, Charles. The \$1.48 million donation is named for her late parents, Margaret Elizabeth and Cullen Bernice Sapp. The extraordinary estate gift from a daughter and her husband will touch the lives of generations of students working to become public school educators, providing the scholarships to help them complete their education.

An alumna of then-Armstrong Junior College, Janice Castles earned an Associate of Arts degree with the financial assistance of a scholarship. That scholarship — coupled with her parents' determination to live sacrificially to provide the education they never experienced for their children — allowed Sapp to begin her post-secondary academic ambitions and inspired her to give to others. She continued her education at the University of Georgia, earning a master's and specialist degree in counseling as well as a doctorate in school psychology. Her longstanding education career included serving as a middle and high school teacher, guidance counselor, school counselor and adjunct professor. She also formed her own psychology practice that provided therapy and psychological assessment and diagnosis in the Atlanta area.

"It is inspiring when alumni, whose lives were transformed through education, give back so generously so that future students can realize the same opportunities," said Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero. "The Castles' gift honors the Sapps' legacy and their desire to help others succeed."

Janice Castles died Dec. 17, 2020, and her husband passed away the year before on July 1, 2019.

"The generous support by the Castles family will assist in removing financial barriers for many students pursuing initial teacher preparation degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at Georgia Southern for many years to come," said Amy Heaston, Ed.D., former College of Education interim dean. "Initial teacher preparation degrees provide students with the first step to becoming certified to teach. For many students, the Margaret Elizabeth and Cullen Bernice Sapp Memorial Scholarship will provide a needed opportunity to achieve their aspirations of teaching in their own classrooms."

CONVOCATION CENTER TO BEAR NAME OF LATE STATE SENATOR AND HIS WIFE

Georgia Southern is planning a significant addition to its south campus in Statesboro with a new building that will provide state-of-the-art space for several academic programs and will be the new home of Eagles basketball. The facility, which will also host indoor graduations and other university events, will be named the Jack and Ruth Ann Hill Convocation Center, honoring the late Georgia State Sen. Jack Hill and his wife of 46 years, Ruth Ann Hill. The Tattnall County couple graduated from Georgia Southern and both passed away last year. In February, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents approved naming the convocation center for the Hills. Envisioned as the signature building on Georgia Southern's south campus, it will be built on University-owned land on the southwest side of the intersection of Lanier Drive and Veterans Memorial Parkway.

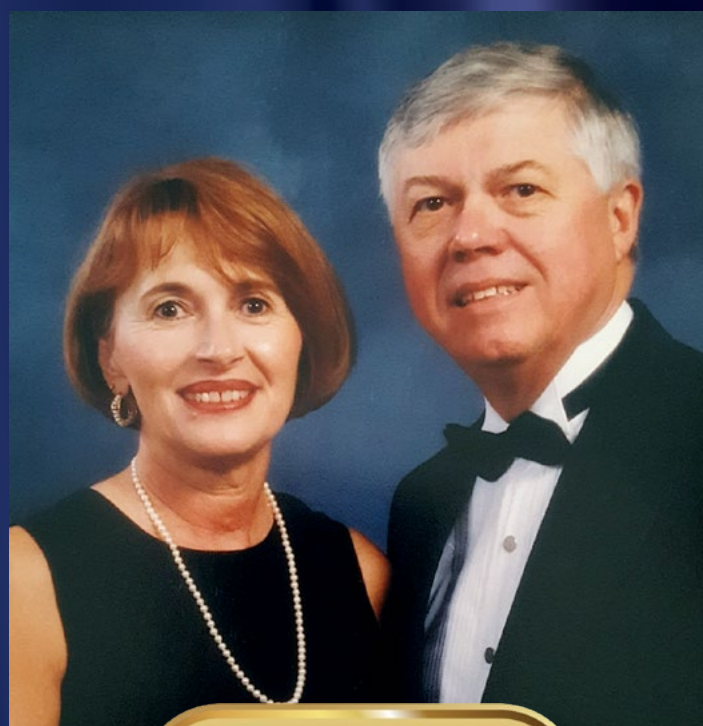
"This will be a tremendous addition to our Statesboro Campus, for our local community, and for our students," said Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero. "We are grateful to the governor and the legislature for supporting this project, which will be a permanent reminder of the generational impact made by Jack and Ruth Ann Hill."

A prominent resident of Reidsville, Georgia, Jack Hill ('66) was the longest serving Georgia senator when he died in April 2020. He was a senator for 30 years, serving as chairman of several crucial committees, including the powerful appropriations committee, which has broad jurisdiction over legislation involving budgeting and spending state and federal funds. With Hill's support, Georgia Southern reached new heights as an institution serving the southeast region and the state of Georgia. He was instrumental in helping the University expand its programs and build several new state-of-the-art facilities, including the Engineering and Research Building, which opened for classes in January.

His wife of 48 years, Ruth Ann, was a career educator who retired as principal of Reidsville Elementary School. She was a triple Eagle, earning degrees from Georgia Southern in 1973, 1990 and 1991.

"Together, Ruth Ann and Senator Hill left an indelible mark on this institution, southeast Georgia and the state," Marrero said. "I am very proud to be part of the effort to recognize and honor these special alumni and public servants."

The General Assembly approved funding for the project in Gov. Brian Kemp's Fiscal Year 2022 budget. Other funding will come from the University and privately raised donations. Final designs and a groundbreaking schedule will be completed and scheduled in spring of 2022.



JACK AND
RUTH ANN HILL
CONVOCATION
CENTER

1930s

Verna L. Beard ('37) died Dec. 17, 2020, in Kailua Kona, Hawaii, at age 105. Throughout her long life, she taught school, worked for an aircraft company and for other businesses. She lived 40 years in Tampa, 29 years in Atlanta, 20 years near Chicago and the last 15 years in Hawaii.

Fayrene Sturgis Wilson ('55,'74) of Savannah died Dec. 14, 2020. She taught for several years in Savannah-Chatham public schools and also worked as a bookkeeper for various businesses. She was a longstanding member of the Adam Brinson I chapter of Colonial Dames and the NSDAR Savannah chapter.

gift named for her late parents. The gift honoring her parents will provide scholarships for students wishing to pursue a career in teaching. You can read more about that in the support section of *Georgia Southern Magazine*.

Baxton "Pete" Garland ('59) died Dec. 21, 2020, in Augusta, Georgia. He had a 41-year career in public education as a teacher and administrator. He also served five years as director of education for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Augusta.

Virginia Ragsdale Bragg ('55) of Augusta, Georgia, died Jan. 5, 2021. She was an educator for the Richmond County School System for more than 30 years.

Hamilton Lee Grant ('56) of Titusville, Florida, died Jan. 18, 2021. The U.S. Air Force veteran served as an anti-aircraft missile radar operator during the Korean War. He worked for NASA and retired from the Kennedy Space Center.

Eleanor Brooks DeLoach ('54,'82) of Statesboro died Jan. 29, 2021. She was a public school teacher for two decades and also taught in the developmental studies program at Georgia Southern.

James McAleer Jr. ('54) of Savannah died at home Feb. 20, 2021. He joined

the Marine Corps at age 17 during WWII. After returning home, he took law classes at night. In 1950, he was activated in the Marine Corps Reserve and served in the Korean War. He began his law practice in 1953 and retired in 2003. He was active in the Savannah community, serving as president of both the Savannah Bar Association and the Savannah Plaintiffs Trial Lawyers Club, chairman of the Chatham County Hospital Authority and Commandant of the Marine Corps League of Savannah.

Billy Martin Jackson ('58) of Beaumont, Texas, died March 2, 2021. He was a teacher before entering the insurance industry where he retired as a manager in Ohio.

James Snooks ('56) of Springfield, Georgia, died at home on April, 20, 2021. He had a long career as a builder and developer in Effingham and Chatham counties and other areas. He was a past president and member of the Home Builders Association of Savannah, past director of the Home Builders Association of Georgia and a past director of the National Association of Home Builders.

During his 44-year career, he served in the Army Reserves, worked in the Georgia Department of Human Resources and had a private practice as a family therapist.

Woodrow "Woody" Davis Jr. ('66) of Warner Robins, Georgia, died Nov. 7, 2020. The longtime certified public accountant also served as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army.

Currey Gayle ('69) of Marietta, Georgia, died Nov. 20, 2020, after an aggressive cancer diagnosis. He had a successful career in the insurance industry for over 40 years.

Maude "Beth" Rigdon Fletcher ('61) died in a hospital in Ocala, Florida, Nov. 21, 2020. She worked as a teacher and was the co-owner of a drug store.

John Cook Sr. ('65), of Franklin, Tennessee, passed peacefully on Dec. 3, 2020. He was the owner of a refrigeration equipment company.

Jean Arlen Hester Harris ('60) of Buena Vista, Georgia, died of cardiac arrest after undergoing treatment for lung cancer on Dec. 7, 2020. She was a retired educator and administrator, spending 30 years with the Marion County, Georgia, school system.

1940s

Cleo Edenfield Mallard ('41) died at her Statesboro home Dec. 25, 2020, in hospice care. The retired teacher was 101 years old.

Alice Jo Lane Giddens ('42) died Dec. 27, 2020, in Savannah. The Bulloch County native lived many years in Valdosta, Georgia, where she influenced the lives of kindergarten students for 35 years.

Janice Louise Sapp Castles ('57) died Dec. 17, 2020, in Savannah. The Savannah native received a Sallie Maude Jones Scholarship to attend Armstrong Junior College where she earned an Associate of Arts degree. She continued her academic studies at the University of Georgia for a bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree. She married the Reverend Charles Castles in 1965. Over the course of her life, she was employed as a counselor and school psychologist in Georgia schools and established a psychology practice in Atlanta that involved therapy and psychological assessment and diagnosis. Castles was a fellow in the Academy of Counseling Psychologists, a member of the American Psychological Association, the International Rorschach Society and several other professional organizations. Before her death, Castles and her late husband honored the Georgia Southern University Foundation with a \$1.48 million estate

1950s

Warner "Clifford" Johnson Jr. ('58) died Nov. 13, 2020, at his home in Fernandina Beach, Florida. He coached football at Bradwell Institute in Hinesville, Georgia, for 30 years until he retired in 1987.

Frankie Bland O'Brien ('58) of Roswell, Georgia, died Nov. 20, 2020. She was an elementary school teacher before raising her two children. Later, she worked for the Georgia State Soccer Association to promote youth soccer.

1960s

Larry Duncan ('68) died Sept. 4, 2020, in hospice care in Albany, Georgia.

Gwendolyn Ferguson Hoffman ('62) of Grovetown, Georgia, died Dec. 17, 2020, at a hospital in Augusta. The lifelong resident of Grovetown retired as a teacher with the Columbia County Board of Education.

Aubrey James Kline Jr. ('64) of Aiken, South Carolina, died Dec. 26, 2020. He served in the Marine Corps and had a long and distinguished career as a college professor.

James Terry Gordon ('65) of Norcross, Georgia, died unexpectedly Dec. 30, 2020. He was the founder and owner of a small accounting practice. He was a sergeant in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and volunteered his time with numerous charitable and community organizations. He was a board member of Zoo Atlanta and for Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International.

Jayce Ramage Jr. ('67) of Savannah died at home Jan. 2, 2021. He served in the U.S. Army before a 36-year career with Allstate.

William Richard Dennard ('66) formerly of Milledgeville, Georgia, died at his Statesboro home Jan. 2, 2021, after battling pulmonary fibrosis. As a packaging and transportation manager in the kaolin industry, he traveled extensively for Engelhard/BASF

Corporation as their liaison, trouble-shooter and problem solver.

D. Maynor Dykes ('61) of North Augusta, South Carolina, died Jan. 3, 2021. After 43 years of service, he retired from SRS and had a second career as an engineering consultant.

Anne Edwards Coppock Browning ('62) of Midway, Georgia, died Jan. 7, 2021. She worked as an art teacher, sales representative and as a real estate broker.

John Carlisle ('69) of Wilmington Island, Georgia, died after a brief illness Jan. 16, 2021. He served his country in the U.S. Air Force before establishing Savannah Marble Company in 1981.

Melinda Waters Roberts ('69) of Richmond Hill, Georgia, died Jan. 25, 2021, at her residence. She loved summers and spending evenings on her dock watching the sun set.

Ann Folger Hurford ('68) of Lilburn, Georgia, died peacefully Feb. 6, 2021, from complications of Alzheimer's disease. She was a legal secretary and stay-at-home mom.

Rebecca Ray Lock ('69) of Aiken, South Carolina passed Feb. 9, 2021, following an extended illness. She taught physical education for 25 years and owned a store in downtown Aiken.

Carol Mobley Tibbles ('62) died Feb. 11, 2021, in Jacksonville, Florida. As a Georgia Southern student, she was on the women's gymnastics team. She taught the sport in Atlanta and was a physical education and health teacher at schools in Atlanta.

Oliver Russell ('62) of Keysville, Georgia, died Feb. 14, 2021, after battling Alzheimer's disease. He is remembered as an influential coach to many high school athletes in the CSRA.

Jeanette Cribbs Griffin Martin ('63,'89) died Feb. 14, 2021, in hospice care in Statesboro. She was a full-time instructor for 32 years at Savannah Technical College.

Joseph Mitchell ('68) of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, passed Feb. 22, 2021, in Jacksonville, Florida. He served as a teacher and principal in the Duval County School System for 34 years.

Wallace Culpepper ('69) of Columbus, Georgia, died Feb. 25, 2021, in hospice care.

Maxine Sheppard Saunders ('64) of Louisville, Georgia, died at her residence March 9, 2021. She enjoyed antiquing, cooking and spending time with family and friends.

John Lawson ('65) of Jackson, Mississippi, died March 17, 2021. He had a long career in the

steel industry, primarily working for Bethlehem Steel Company.

Georgia Marshall Dickerson ('68,'80) of Savannah died March 21, 2021, having celebrated her 99th birthday in December. She was a retired educator from the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System where she enjoyed a career as a teacher and an elementary principal.

Betty L. Morgan ('61) of Savannah died at her home March 26, 2021. She retired from Savannah-Chatham Public Schools as a librarian after 30 years of service.

Kathryn Owens Tankersley ('65) died April 2, 2021, in hospice care in Statesboro. She directed a church choir, played the piano and was a Sunday School teacher.

Richard (Dick) Baker ('60) of Stone Mountain, Georgia, died of cancer April 15, 2021. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served a combat tour in southeast Asia. The avid runner was also an educator and counselor in Dekalb County high schools.

Marie Brennecke Rogers ('64) of Austell, Georgia, died April 17, 2021 at Presbyterian Village. She had a long career as an educator in elementary schools and for the U.S. Army.

1970s

Donna Jones Story ('71) of Matthews, Georgia, died at home July 14, 2020. She was a teacher for 45 years in the Augusta area.

Jessica "Beth" Waldrop Harris ('74,'79) of Savannah died Aug. 2, 2020. She worked in education in several states and was an active church member.

Lillian Korfhage McCrea ('70) of Alma, Georgia, died at home Oct. 9, 2020, after a short illness. She retired from the Bacon County Board of Education after many years as a teacher and counselor.

Larry Johnson ('71) of Millen, Georgia, passed away Oct. 11, 2020. He was a football coach in Chatham, Columbia and Jenkins counties, a principal, a vice principal and a farmer.

Thomas Groover Sr. ('75) of Tybee Island, Georgia, died suddenly at home Oct. 12, 2020. He was a history teacher, a JV boys' basketball coach, boat captain and a master shipbuilder, a career that would take him all over the world.

Herbert "Hub" Powell Jr. ('73) of Statesboro died Nov. 5, 2020, after a battle with cancer. The lifelong resident of Bulloch County retired from the Georgia Department

of Corrections where he served as a chief probation officer.

John Cresswell ('76) of Columbia, South Carolina, died Nov. 18, 2020. He served in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and worked for the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control for more than 40 years.

Robert Bergbom ('70) of St. Augustine, Florida, died Nov. 21, 2020, after a long battle with brain cancer. He was recruited to Georgia Southern on a basketball scholarship. He retired from Pier 1 Imports after 35 years in management.

Raleigh A. Bryant Jr. ('71) of Savannah died Dec. 18, 2020. A veteran of the U.S. Army, he achieved the rank of major, and served in World War II. He was a retired principal of the Chatham County Public School System. He was deeply involved in the culture of Savannah, serving as a past member of several boards including the Savannah Symphony Society and Savannah Science Museum.

Beverley Cratty McCraw ('79,'94) of Savannah died Dec. 27, 2020, at home after a six-year battle with metastatic breast cancer. For the last 23 years, she worked in the neonatal unit with Memorial Health Medical Center. Over the years she fostered 43 children and adopted two of them.

Ann Sinnott Considine ('74,'76) of Savannah passed on Dec. 30, 2020. She was a Special Education administrator for the Georgia Learning Resources System, Southeast Region. And was named Georgia Special Education Administrator of the Year in 1991.

Eugenia (Jeanie) Salter Frost ('78) of Hinesville, Georgia, died at home January 13, 2021. The lifelong native of Liberty County retired as an adult probation officer with the state of Georgia.

Mary Will Marchman Long ('70) of Springfield, Georgia, died at home Jan. 21, 2021. She taught and retired from Springfield Elementary School.

Dennis Waters Jr ('73) of Allenhurst, Georgia, died Jan. 27, 2021, at Candler Hospital due to complications from COVID-19. He had a long career in residential and commercial real estate in coastal Georgia.

Dudley "Burr" Bachler ('76) of Waleska, Georgia, died unexpectedly Jan. 28, 2021, from complications associated with coronary heart disease. A publisher of Grier's Almanac, he is remembered as a carefree, Southern gentleman whose curiosity led him off the beaten paths.

Dr. Joseph Charles Flynn Jr. ('79) of Orlando, Florida, died at home on Feb. 4, 2021. He was a board certified orthopedic spinal surgeon at the Spine and Scoliosis Center.

Marguerite Lockhart Thurmond ('72), formerly of Macon, Georgia, died Feb. 19, 2021, in Atlanta. The nursing graduate loved to sing and was active in University chorus, music clubs, church choirs and civic chorales.

Freiya Wester Brown ('72) of Statesboro died at Cartersville Medical Center Feb. 20, 2021. She was a teacher in Bulloch County schools for 27 years and a pianist at the church where her husband served as pastor.

Julia Easterling Gooding ('76) of Savannah, died Feb. 27, 2021. She retired after 34 years of teaching.

Andrew Jackson McLemore III ('75) of Savannah died peacefully March 5, 2021. The U.S. Army veteran later retired from Savannah State University as a librarian and began practicing law.

H. Gerald Jowers ('72) of Winter Garden, Florida, passed March 6, 2021. He worked for the family's battery business and created other business ventures through the years. He served in numerous civic organizations and was an outdoorsman and turkey hunter.

William "Bill" Hodges Jr. ('73) of Millen, Georgia, died March 27, 2021. He was a comptroller at Brooks Instruments in Statesboro and worked at Claude Howard Lumber Company, for 20 years until his retirement in 2016.

Nancy Ann Heffernan ('74) of Savannah died at home April 6, 2021, from complications of liver cancer. Friends say the artist was a free spirit, outspoken and a great photographer. The former Savannah Morning News photographer is remembered for the now famous photo of former President Jimmy Carter standing on the bar at the infamous Pinkie Master's tavern. According to her family, the Smithsonian displayed one of her pieces of artwork.

Ralph Nix ('70) of Macon, Georgia, died April 13, 2021. He served in the U.S. Air Force and for 43 years worked for the Middle Georgia Regional Commission serving as executive director from 2006 to 2016.

Stephen Sweat ('72) formerly of Atlanta, died April 17, 2021, while resting at home in White Oak, Georgia. He spent his entire career in sales working in the apparel business.

Charlene Cromer Heyward ('75) of Gilbert, Georgia, was surrounded by family when she died April 21, 2021. She was a teacher, wife and mother.

Earle MacDonald ('71,'74) of Savannah died April 28, 2021, under the care of Signature Health Nursing Home and Candler Hospital. After leaving the priesthood, he worked for Georgia DFACS before joining the faculty of a public high school in Savannah where he taught world history and Latin for decades.

Parker Davis ('76) of Bainbridge, Georgia, passed away May 28, 2021, at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. He was the registrar emeritus of Macon State College and the "Voice of the Mustangs" at Macon State's basketball games when the college had intercollegiate sports. The U.S. Army veteran retired from the University System of Georgia having served at Armstrong Atlantic University, Waycross College and Macon State College.

1980s

Mary Stubbs Tyson ('81) of Savannah died Dec. 3, 2020, in the hospital. She had an extensive career in education as an elementary school teacher and later as an elementary librarian with the Chatham County Board of Education.

Bunny Crawford

Hatchett ('82) of Dublin, Georgia, died Dec. 5, 2020. She was a teacher for 39 years.

C. L. Neil Hollomon

('84) of Warner Robins, Georgia died at home Dec. 21, 2020. During his 60-year career in real estate, he was a developer, broker, general contractor and consultant. He later became an educator and coach in Houston County schools.

Tara Lasseter Guise ('80)

of Pensacola, Florida, died Dec. 31, 2020. A wife and mother, she enjoyed scrapbooking, family activities and mentoring young women who needed guidance.

Martha Crouthers

Grindler ('81) of Statesboro died at home on Jan. 29, 2021. She taught in the Georgia Southern College of Education for 10 years and served two consecutive terms on the Emanuel County Board of Education.

Robin Maddox McCorkle

('82) of Hinesville, Georgia, died Feb. 22, 2021. A wife and mother, she loved to cross stitch, grow roses and camping.

Jim "Slim" Simmons ('87)

of Statesboro died March 12, 2021, after a battle with bladder cancer. He was a history teacher and high school baseball and softball coach.

William "Chip"

Herrington ('89) of Loris, South Carolina, died March 22, 2021, after a brief illness. He had his own construction business.

Mary Dutton Evans '84)

of Glennville, Georgia, died at home April 20, 2021, in hospice care. She was an educator for over 32 years before retiring from Diamond Elementary School on Fort Stewart.

James "Bud" Johnston

Jr. ('87), a retired Lt. Col. in the U.S. Army, died in Statesboro April 30, 2021. He worked at Griner's Cricket Farm and at the Cooper-Wiss plant before a second career teaching world geography at Statesboro High.

David Akin ('80) of

Blackshear, Georgia passed away May 24, 2021, following a brief illness. He served in the U.S. Army before he attended Georgia Southern University. During his career in education, he was a teacher and administrator.

1990s

Retired Maj. John H.

Williams III ('96), who grew up in North Augusta, South Carolina, died Nov. 1, 2020. He served with distinction in the U.S. Marine Corps and had multiple deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq during his years of service.

Kevin James Trainor

('93) passed away Nov. 13, 2020, at his residence in the Savannah suburb of Wilmington Island.

Paul Coleman ('92)

of Mableton, Georgia, passed away in the hospital Nov. 16, 2020. He was the owner/operator of a car wash.

Annie Birnbaum Owston

('97) of Savannah was surrounded by family when she died Dec. 20, 2020. The native of Bordeaux, France, worked for many years as a substitute teacher in Chatham County.

Kimberly "Kim"

Skadan ('96) of Everett, Washington, died unexpectedly at home Dec. 27, 2020. She was a dedicated teacher at Gold Bar Elementary School for 24 years.

Zita Hall Baine ('93), of

Sarasota, Florida, died Jan. 3, 2021. She was a catering adviser and event planner in the hospitality industry.

Sandra Lewis Calhoon

('95) of Memphis, Tennessee, died Jan. 19, 2021, at Methodist University Hospital. She worked as a nurse in pediatrics and home health care.

Rev. John "Tom"

Edwards Jr. ('91,'95) of Port Wentworth, Georgia, died at home March 6, 2021. A member of the South Georgia United Methodist Conference,

he served churches in the Waycross, Columbus and Dublin districts and retired as the pastor of Port Wentworth United Methodist Church in the Savannah District.

Brett Herrin ('90) of

Savannah died March 17, 2021. He worked as a farmer, concrete contractor and in recent years was a long-haul truck driver.

Emily Hope Smith

Daniel ('95) of Metter, Georgia, died May 5, 2021, in Augusta. She was a kindergarten teacher at Langston Chapel Elementary School in Statesboro.

Susan Arnold Creasy

('94) of Brooklet, Georgia, died at home May 5, 2021. She was a schoolteacher in Effingham, Screven and Bulloch counties.

2000s

Vern Mamon ('12) died

March 25, 2020, in Louisiana. He was an educator.

Timothy Hendrix ('00)

of Lyons, Georgia, died April 2, 2020, after an extended illness. He retired from Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant as a reactor operator after 35+ years of service.

Rebecca Lynn Peterson

('16) of Ridgewood, New Jersey, died unexpectedly July 25, 2020, in Florida. The psychology major was

making plans to continue her education in South Carolina.

Mark Case ('04,'11) of Savannah died peacefully Nov. 2, 2020, after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. He worked as a counselor and served as the athletic director at Oglethorpe Charter School for many years.

Kayla Waggoner Everett

('05) of Midland, Texas, died Feb. 16, 2021. The fashion and business degree major was a wife and mother.

Anthony Stuckey ('10)

of Dublin, Georgia, died tragically in a car crash along with his pregnant wife and their 3-year-old son March 14, 2021. Their car caught fire in a four-vehicle crash on I-16 in Bulloch County. Stuckey was the principal of Dublin High School.

Sergio Miguel Ortega-

Gonzalez ('19) of

Hinesville, Georgia, died March 27, 2021.

He graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science.

Sheila Claxton McKee

('05) died in hospice care in Statesboro, April 6, 2021. She taught K-12th grade music at Bulloch Academy from 2001-2013 and served as pianist for First Baptist Church Statesboro from 1993-2018.

EAGLE NATION

Professor Emeritus Kenneth Relyea, Ph.D., of Savannah died August 5, 2020 at home. He was a member of the biology department on the Armstrong Campus from 1990-2006, and he provided leadership as head of the department for several years. He was selected as a favorite faculty member by Armstrong alumni during the consolidation and his name is listed on the Wall of Honor in the Alumni Center on the Savannah campus.

Martin NeSmith, ('70) of Claxton and Shellman Bluff, Georgia, died at home Nov. 17, 2020. He served in the National Guard and began a long career in the automotive industry. At age 24, he became the youngest auto dealer in the U.S. after purchasing a Chevrolet dealership in Claxton. He expanded his holdings to include dealerships in Hinesville and Jesup, as well as a used car dealership in Statesboro and a rental car company in Claxton. In 2001, he received the highest honor an automobile dealer can achieve, the Time Magazine Quality Dealer of the Year Award. He served on multiple state and national boards including the Georgia Southern University Foundation Board and the University System of Georgia Board of

Regents. A philanthropist, he provided Georgia Southern with financial support and he contributed his time, money and talents to countless civic organizations, churches and other organizations. He died at age 72.

Jeanne McGowan, director of counseling on the Armstrong Campus, died unexpectedly Jan. 3, 2021. While McGowan served the campus community, she also devoted her time to building her skills as a counselor. She received multiple awards for her campus collaborations and work in the field of college student mental health. She was a certified trainer for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills and she founded and oversaw the peer education team, Peers Educating Peers (PEP) on campus.

Theodore Pierce Dickens, DMA an adjunct instructor of organ, piano and music theory, died Jan. 9, 2021, in Statesboro. He joined the faculty of Georgia Southern University in 2010 and was active in the community as a church musician, accompanist and clinician.

Professor James Stephens, DHA, of Statesboro died Feb. 4, 2021, in hospice care. The former hospital president and CEO had been a faculty member

in the Department of Health Policy and Community Health in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) since 2007. He was the founding program director of the Master of Healthcare Administration program, one of the most popular academic programs in the JPHCOPH. He died at age 73.

Professor Emeritus Frederick Brogdon, Ph.D. ('63) of Lyons, Georgia, died at home Feb. 10, 2021, following an extended illness. He was a professor of history at Georgia Southern from 1965 until his retirement in 1998. For many years, he served as the assistant head of the history department. He will also be remembered for his devotion to the Georgia Southern athletics program. During football season, his Saturdays were spent tailgating at Paulson Stadium or on the road following the Eagles wherever they played.

Professor Emerita Kitty Burke Williams, ('70,'81) died Feb. 15, 2021, following a brief battle with pancreatic cancer. For 26 years, she taught accounting at Georgia Southern. After taking medical disability retirement due to her diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, she and her husband moved to Tybee Island, Georgia. She died at age 73.

Professor Emeritus John Gutknecht, died March 27, 2021, at the William F. Green Veterans Home in Bay Minette, Alabama. He served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps and after 28 years retired from Kaiser Aluminum. He then joined the Georgia Southern faculty as a professor in the Parker College of Business and director of the Master of Business Administration program.

Professor Francis "Frank" M. Thorne III, Ph.D., a longtime member of the biology department on the Armstrong Campus passed away. He joined Armstrong College in the fall of 1965 just in time to help move the department from its original facilities on Bull Street to its current location on Abercorn. He was the original caretaker of the Armstrong Campus greenhouse and, with the help of plant taxonomy students, established an herbarium. He retired in 2010. He was selected as a favorite faculty member by Armstrong alumni during the consolidation and his name is listed on the Wall of Honor in the Alumni Center on the Savannah campus.

Professor Emerita Sandra Tindol Franklin ('59) of Metter, Georgia, died at home June 18, 2021. The professor in middle grades and secondary education served two terms on the

Candler County Board of Education. She retired in 1993 after devoting 32 years to her career in public education.

Professor Emeritus Thomas Parker Bishop of Statesboro died June 19, 2021, following a brief illness. He began his Georgia Southern career in the physics department in 1967 and transferred to the education department near the end of his 30-year career. The astronomy professor had a passion for HAM radio, and was known as "N4PB".



WINGS UP, SLEEVES UP!

COVID-19 Vaccine PODs (Point of Dispensing) took over parking lots and gymnasium spaces on the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses in a collaborative effort unlike any other Georgia Southern has taken on. The drive-through and walk-in clinics were led by the University's Medical Director Brian DeLoach, M.D., and Assistant Professor of Epidemiology in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) Jessica Smith Schwind, Ph.D.

When the moment arrived for vaccine availability, more than 360 volunteers including faculty, staff and students from JPHCOPH and the Waters College of Health Professions, University Police, Facilities Services, Information Technology Services and many others from across the University rolled up their sleeves and helped to put more than 7,400 total shots in arms by June 10.

Not only did this endeavor provide the University community with convenient and free-of-charge access to the COVID-19 vaccine, but it also provided public health and nursing students with an unforgettable experience that helped to prepare them for their careers.



CONTACT US

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
and other submissions are encouraged.
Georgia Southern magazine
P.O. Box 8055
Statesboro, GA 30460-8055
magazine@georgiasouthern.edu

CLASS CHRONICLES and
alumni updates may be sent to
Office of Alumni Relations
P.O. Box 8055
Statesboro, GA 30460-8055
magazine@georgiasouthern.edu

Georgia Southern magazine
is published biannually
for Alumni and Friends of
Georgia Southern University
by the Office of University
Communications and
Marketing.

Georgia Southern
University is a member of
the University System of
Georgia and an Affirmative
Action/Equal Opportunity
institution.



MAGAZINE STAFF

PRESIDENT
Kyle Marrero

VICE PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS
AND MARKETING
John Lester
DIRECTOR
COMMUNICATIONS
Jennifer S. Wise

MANAGER
EDITORIAL CONTENT
Doy Cave
MANAGER
CREATIVE SERVICES
Christy McNutt

WRITERS
Sandra Bennett
Liz Walker
Crissie Elrick Bath
Melanie Simón
Kyle Dawson
Kaitlin Anderson

DESIGNERS
Courtney Cheshire
Mallory McLendon
Wes Johnson

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Katherine Arntzen
Jonathan Chick
AJ Henderson

READY TO SOAR

Become a double eagle when you earn a graduate degree from Georgia Southern University. Armstrong and Georgia Southern alumni are eligible.

The DOUBLE EAGLE Society is a joint initiative between the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies and the Georgia Southern University Alumni Association. This initiative was created to recognize our alumni who have earned two or more degrees — one undergraduate and one graduate or two graduate — from Georgia Southern.

Double Eagles enjoy:

- Career advancement opportunities that come with earning a graduate degree
- Recognition at commencement ceremonies
- A recognition pin to display your achievement and loyalty
- Invitations to elite alumni networking and entertainment events

Apply now!

GeorgiaSouthern.edu/gradadmissions



**GEORGIA
SOUTHERN
UNIVERSITY**